FERRET STRESS: TIPS FOR HEALTHIER FERRETS

Modern FERRET™

Award Winner! One of the Twelve Best Magazines — *min magazine*

ISSUE# 22

For ferret owners. By ferret owners.™

May/June 1999

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW with Playboy Playmate Tiffany Taylor and her Seven Slinky Ferrets

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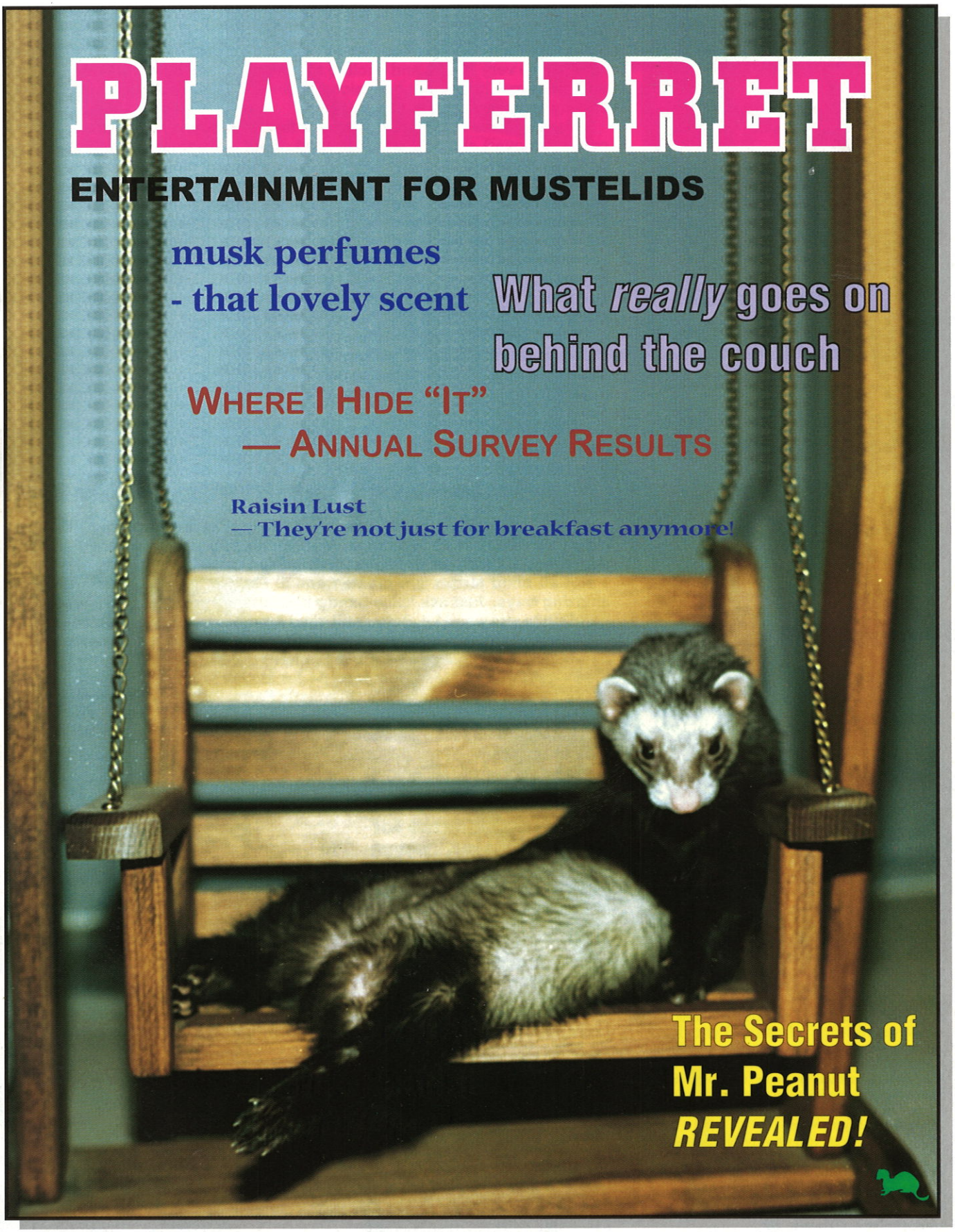

Photo of Mr. Peanut courtesy of Corrie Rooney of Bayonne, NJ.

Minding Your Own Business™

Mary and Balthazar

The Modern Staff:

Mary R. Shefferman - Editor-in-Chief
Eric Shefferman - Designer
- being fuzzy -
Sabrina
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Balthazar
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Gabrielle
Rest in peace...
Barnaby
Ralph

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All offers/contests are void where prohibited, taxed, or otherwise frowned upon by the powers that be.

Front Cover photo by Eric Shefferman. Featuring Tiffany Taylor and her ferret Diesel. Makeup and hair by Kenneth C. Kiefer.

We have a lot of big news to tell you about in this issue of *Modern Ferret*, so I'll get right to it.

Modern Ferret was named one of the top 12 magazines of 1999 by *min magazine*. We're very happy and excited to be recognized by our peers in the magazine industry. Check out some pictures of the awards reception in New York City and my comments on pages 6 and 7.

This May/June issue (#22) marks a first in *Modern Ferret* history (our first celebrity cover) and a first in the world of pet magazines (a centerfold model's pets as centerfold models). Tiffany Taylor, *Playboy* magazine's Miss November 1998, and her ferrets visited us here at *Modern Ferret* and posed for our cover and centerfold. Now Tiffany's ferrets are *Modern Ferret*'s Miss & Misters May/June 1999. Tiffany's interview and some great photos of her with her ferrets start on page 34. While Tiffany was here, we took the opportunity to shoot a second centerfold photo of her with her ferrets, which we'll run in a future issue (if you're a Tiffany fan, you'll want to keep that in mind). We also got very lucky and found four of Tiffany's ferrets to very cooperatively pose for a centerfold photo we've been trying to set up for several years now.

There's also big news on the ferret medical front. Dr. Charles Weiss of the Potomac Animal Hospital in Maryland gives us an update on his research into promising new drug therapies to help alleviate the symptoms of adrenal disease in ferrets that can't have surgery. "New Advances in the Treatment of Adrenal Tumors" begins on page 22.

Sometimes pet shops don't properly house the ferrets they have for sale. Ferret clubs can often influence how the ferrets in local pet shops are cared for, if they take the right approach. Long Island's A Ferret Club has created a Pet Store Patrol, a clever way to help get pet shops to treat ferrets right. See page 18 for details.

Stress is a problem for humans and animals alike. In "Stress in Older Ferrets" (page 28), Pamela E. Troutman, with some suggestions from Bob Church, addresses the problem of stress and what you can do to help alleviate it.

Not all blind ferrets are created equal. Ferrets adapt to their limitations in amazing ways. Just ask Millie Sanders about her ferret Ammonia who has been blind since she was a kit. Better still, read Ammonia's story on page 46.

Clubs and shelters are always looking for inventive ways to finance the care of needy ferrets. This issue's Club & Shelter Fundraising feature offers up a new idea — a photo contest. See page 54 for Michael Janke's article on the South Florida Ferret Club & Rescue's "Funtastic Ferret Foto Frenzy." Don't miss these cuties!

What would an issue of *Modern Ferret* be without a Fairy-Tail? This time we look in on "Xany: Weasel-Warrior Princess" and her friend Babblette as they take on a very large foe. Enjoy!

—Mary

These numbers are for BUSINESS USE ONLY!

There is simply not enough time for individual advice/consultations over the phone. We cannot take orders by phone.

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Modern Ferret™

Vol. 4 No. 4

For ferret owners. By ferret owners.™

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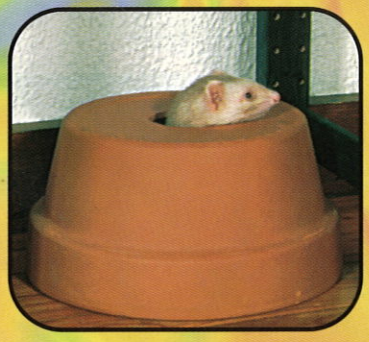
The face that launched a thousand ferrets!
See page 34!

Some ferrets are nuts — but one is Almond Joy!
See page 61!



Everybody needs a place to hide!
See page 30!

Camera!

Lights!

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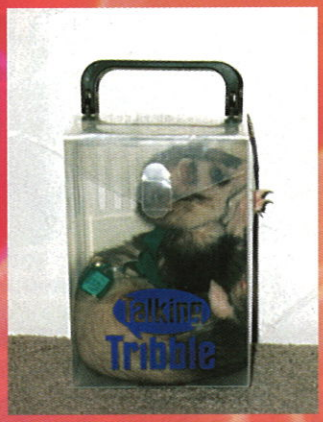
Pink Noses™

Willow giving Heather a big kiss!
by Gail MacAdams of Warwick RI



Guinevere thinks she's a Tribble
by Travis and Susan Fessler
of Florence KY

"Somebody's been sleeping in my hammock!"
Loki (ferret) and Rosie (cat)
by Barbara Kretschmer of Batavia NY

Gizmo peeking out from under the nightstand
by Marianne Lara of Meridian ID

"How much product placement do you
think we can get away with?"
"I don't know — try turning the yogurt around!"
Jennifer's ferrets Jasmine and Daisy

Rocky, Vinnie, and Peanut
love sleeping in the dresser drawers
by Sue Peasley of Necedah WI

Amy Robinson with Rudy and Misty
by Harriett Sisson of Fayetteville AR

Corey Willix with Tigger and Igor
by Laurie and Corey Willix of Chicago IL

Hannah sharing her Valentine's sucker with Hobbs
by John and Debi Fell

"How did he get up there?"
Igor and Tigger
by Laurie and Corey Willix of Chicago IL

Jennifer with her ferrets
Samantha, Casey, Jasmine, and Daisy

Pink Noses™ is sponsored by Four Paws Products Ltd.

See contest details on pg. 69

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Modern Ferret Magazine was named one of the **12 Best Magazines** in the magazine industry by *min magazine* (a publication of the Media Industry Newsletter and Phillips Business Information, Inc.).

The 12 Best Magazines in the Business are:

The Economist, *The New Yorker*, *MAXIM*, *Modern Ferret*, *Racer*, *Elle Decor*, *Broadcasting & Cable*, *Red Herring*, *Information Week*, *Teen People*, *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel*, and *ESPN The Magazine*.

"In choosing these exceptional magazines," said David Shaw, senior vice president of PBI, "the *min* staff looked primarily for publications that were doing something very special. They were either hugely strong financially or totally in tune with their target readers — or, ideally, both."

There we are, among the greats! Mary just had her hair done a more shocking shade of red. And didn't we already tell you she's the best looking ferret magazine editor? I'm wearing a suit from Men's Warehouse of Lake Grove (see Dave). You're going to like the way I look, they guarantee it! Of course, you'll never see me dressed like this again... — Oh, and don't we look tall?

Mary wearing her genuine acrylic coat.

In the *min* article, *Modern Ferret* was on the page opposite *The Economist*. So here we are with Matthew Bishop (left) and Paul Rossi (right) from *The Economist*. They said that as soon as they saw the article, they had to run out and find a copy of *Modern Ferret* to see what we were about. Of course, we had seen *The Economist* before since we had been mentioned on page 35 of their December 13, 1997 issue. These guys are way too zany for us to believe they work on as serious a publication as *The Economist*. We think they could do a great, Monty Python-like magazine — they certainly have the humor (or is that humour?) for it. And we predict a ferret in Paul's future... — Note: Next to other people, we don't look so tall. (Mary has 4" heels on.)

The most telling part of this evening was the big cheer from this crowd of distinguished magazine professionals when we went up to accept our award. Many of them came up to us to congratulate us on our entrepreneurial tenacity and ability to create such a tremendous magazine without the benefits of big money, big corporate sponsors, or a big staff — not that we wouldn't mind some big money backing us (hint, hint). Where did we get such tenacity? We learned it from our ferrets!

— Eric

A big THANK YOU to Tonia Ries of *Information Week* for taking photos of us!

MARY'S PAGE!

One of Twelve!

Eric and I were surprised when we came home to find a message on the voicemail from Eric Feil, a reporter from *min magazine*, telling us that *Modern Ferret* had been chosen as one of the year's top special interest magazines. The surprise grew to astonishment as we listened to the list of the other winners in the special interest category — *Racer* and *Elle Décor* — and then on to some of the winners in other categories — *The Economist*, *Teen People*, *ESPN The Magazine*, *Information Week*, *The New Yorker*…

Wait a minute. Since when is *Modern Ferret* comparable to magazines like *The New Yorker* and *The Economist*? How did this happen? What did we do?

It turns out that we put our subject matter and our readers first — and we are creative about it. That's apparently a principal goal in magazine publishing, but one that is often difficult to reach because of financial influences and the difficulty of pairing a good editor with the subject matter with which he or she is compatible. For Eric and me, the subject matter is not only close to our hearts, it's right here in our living room. Our problem — if you can call it a problem — is that we can't get away from our subject matter. Ferrets have permeated every aspect of our lives (and a musky aroma has permeated many of our sweaters). *Modern Ferret*'s ability to maintain editorial focus has never been the difficult part of what we do. Putting our readers first is as simple as putting our concerns about our own ferrets first. Being creative is something of a calling (I wouldn't know how to not be creative). That's not to say that publishing *Modern Ferret* is not hard work; it is. But the kinds of things *min magazine*'s panel of judges found to be exemplary in *Modern Ferret* are the things that come easily and naturally to us. I'm grateful that I'm able to do what I do. I'm thrilled to be recognized for it.

Cocktail Party in NYC

When I used to work in New York City I affectionately referred to it as "EnWhy?" City. The "Why?" is the operative part. Eric and I got all dressed up to go to an awards reception/cocktail party in New York for *min magazine*'s top 12 magazines. We were very excited at the prospect of meeting the people behind the other winning magazines. Then we sat in traffic. The party started at 6:30 PM, but we didn't get there until 7:30 PM. We were very upset (you don't want to know!) since the party ended at 8:00 PM.

We arrived just in time to be called up and given a very nice plaque (now on display in our living room along with our commendation from the Nassau County Executive and our famous-people autographs). After all 12 magazines were given their plaques, Eric and I had a chance to talk with some of the other winners.

Unfortunately, the whole event is a bit of a blur. Many people came up to us to congratulate us and chat with us. *Modern Ferret* was out of left field enough to spark the curiosity of the other winners, many of whom had gone out and bought a copy of Issue #21. Paul Pfanner from *Racer* magazine — one of the three special interest magazine winners — said he'd stopped by our web site. He also said he was thinking about getting a ferret. (It's unfortunate that *Racer* is based in California, where ferrets are illegal.)

Some of the other people we got to talk with were Tony Uphoff from *Information Week*, Paul Rossi and Matthew Bishop from *The Economist*, and Donald Welsh from *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel* (who said he was happy to see that there are still entrepreneurs in the magazine industry). All in all, it was great to get a feel for what our peers in the magazine industry think of us.

Thank You

I want to thank my long-time friend (let's not talk about how long) and hairdresser Kenneth C. Kiefer for doing Tiffany's makeup and hair for this issue. Kenny has worked on all the major fashion/women's magazines, and has even done some work for *Playboy*. Thanks to Kenny also for helping us with the lighting and angles for the photo shoot (Eric was really nervous about photographing a human — ferrets are rarely concerned about how they look in photos).

My Dad, through his carpet business, supplied the flokati area rug for the centerfold shot of Tiffany's little Ferretone tea party. He's always there when I need him. Thanks, Dad.

I also want to thank Jon for his help with figuring out lighting, catching ferrets, moving furniture, and hanging up backdrops for photos.

Finally, I want to thank Tiffany Taylor for *everything*. I didn't know what to expect when I first spoke with her or when I met her. She's really a nice person who has a great love for the same little fuzzy creatures I do.

et cetera

Eric always gets to list the music he listens to while putting together an issue of *Modern Ferret*. I can only listen to music while I'm doing the illustrations for the Ferretted Fairy-Tail. But I do listen. So while I was creating Xany and Babblette, I was listening to The Rolling Stones, Van Morrison, Nick Lowe, The Clash, The Violent Femmes, Rockpile, and Johnny Cash (yes, my taste in music is a weird amalgam).

Early in production, while we were still able to squeeze in some TV, we watched *Hercules*, *Xena*, *Buffy*, *Friends*, *Jesse*, *South Park*, *DS9*, *Earth: Final Conflict*, *Martial Law* (Sammo!), *The Daily Show*, *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*, *Politically Incorrect*, and Howard Stern's show on E! (even the episode with Tiffany!).

The Ferret Directory™

Dear Readers:

We cannot handle all your calls. PLEASE use the resources you see on these pages for your ferret care questions.

Remember, there are only two of us (people that is — all the ferrets REFUSE to answer the phone when they are napping). We cannot handle all your questions and cannot spend all of our time on the phone. This magazine takes a lot of time to produce, and we're doing it all by ourselves — from the photos to the writing to the layouts to all the business details.

Many of the questions that you have are basic questions which are covered in Mary's book or any other good book on ferret care.

We recommend you contact the resources you see listed here — all of our efforts are being directed towards growing and strengthening the magazine to better help ferrets everywhere.

— Mary & Eric & the fuzzies

For advertising information ONLY contact: (516) 981-3574 Mailbox 3

National Ferret Resource

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Springfield VA 22151-0832
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The Ferret Directory™

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nyfrapres@aol.com

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Breeders

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pathfarm@cvn.net

Shelters & Rescues

Illinois
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Mary Van Dahm, Director
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Massachusetts
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The MaFF operates a network of shelters especially for ferrets. For more information about the MaFF and our list of shelters, call our Hotline at (978) 957-9886 or visit our Website at www.maferrets.org

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FOR SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION, SEE PAGE 33!

A litter of letters

Letters to *Modern Ferret*

Mary and Eric,

Please think about making Jennifer Gall's comic strip a regular feature. It is extremely witty and very well drawn. Both my girlfriend and myself had all we could do to keep from getting trampled by our two fuzzies as they rushed to the computer to look up more of Mrs. Gall's strips. And we all enjoyed laughing at her gang's exploits.

We think that a quality strip of humor would only add to the excellence that is *Modern Ferret*.

Sincerely,

Michael Hartman, Kelly Adams, Chichiri SogBottom (gib), and, as of this letter's writing, unnamed sprite (she just came home with us a few days ago)

via e-mail

Your wish is our command. See page 52 for more of Jennifer Gall's "Not Wild, Just Crazy." — Mary

Dear Mary and Eric:

I am a subscriber to your magazine. I was reading your article "The Option to Cremate" in *Modern Ferret* #20 (Jan/Feb 99), and thought I had to write you.

We (my partner Aaron and I) have had a number of ferrets over the last 7 years. Two of the ferrets, Corwyn and Snoopy have passed away. We had them cremated. I wish to pass on to you and your readers one piece of information and one interesting idea.

The piece of information is that when we had the cremation done, a year and a half ago, it was not as expensive as you had listed in your article ($125.00). The fee was $25.00 - $30.00. The cremation was done through a couple of different animal hospitals in the suburbs of Chicago (Wright Animal Hospital of Des Plaines and Bramer Animal Hospital of Evanston). I believe they also send out to a crematorium. In one case, the ashes were returned in a small plastic bag in a simple tin; and in the other case, the ashes were returned in a little plastic bottle, resembling an aspirin bottle. The difference in price probably reflects the benefits of being in a big city. [*Here on Long Island, the cost of living can be absurd. — Mary*]

The interesting idea is one of what to do with these ashes. For each of them, I sewed the ashes into a ferret stuffed animal! Here are the steps of what I did. First, I put the ashes into a small sturdy plastic bottle, if not already in one. Second, I took a ferret stuffed animal and opened up a seam. I took out enough stuffing so as to insert the bottle into the stuffed animal. Then I carefully sewed up the stuffed animal again. The final touch is that we had ID bracelets made with the ferrets' names inscribed, and put them around the necks of the respective stuffed animals. They serve as wonderful memorials. We now have four ferrets: Hissune, Timon, Haplo, and Colbey.

Thanks for a very nice job with your magazine. Finally, my condolences on your loss of Ralph and Barnaby.

Sincerely,

David Yuen and Aaron Parks, too

via e-mail

Thank you for sending in your idea for a memorial. What a creative way to remember your ferrets! — Mary

Dear Eric and Mary:

I'm writing to tell you how much I love your magazine. I've been buying it since Issue four at the pet store, and for my birthday last year my parents got me a subscription to it (as well as a ferret). Your magazine has been very helpful as well as entertaining.

Several years ago I was the "mommy" of two gibs, Zucchini and Fred. I got them just months after ferrets were legalized in Michigan. At the time, there was not much information available on ferrets, so I didn't really know what I was getting into. My boys were caged up most of the time, and after reading your magazine, I realized that they weren't getting the attention that they deserved. Through *Modern Ferret* I discovered that ferrets could not be kept in the cage full time and that they needed to be allowed playtime. I knew I was not a responsible ferret owner, and finally gave my boys up to another ferret owner who seemed to know more about ferrets.

I never lost my love for ferrets. Eventually I acquired three girls. Abracadabra was the oldest, then came Corona Jubilee from a ferret show, and last (but definitely not least) Kaleidoscope, who I just couldn't resist. Your magazine taught me how to care for the ferrets and how important regular vet visits were. When I entered Abbi in the ferret show I knew nothing about how to prepare for it, but your magazine helped. Introducing Cori to Abbi was a struggle because Abbi wasn't interested in having a baby sister, but your magazine taught me how to get them to make some form of peace. It wasn't nearly as hard to introduce Kali, but when the ferrets got sick soon afterwards, your magazine convinced me to take them to the vet for what I thought was just a cold that wouldn't go away. They could have died if I hadn't. From *Modern Ferret* I

A litter of letters

Our address is: Modern Ferret · PO Box 1007 · Smithtown, NY 11787

learned how to care for a sick ferret. Recently, the person who had Zucchini and Fred could no longer keep them. I knew after reading your magazine that it would not be smart to take them to a humane society. Now they're all in good homes and I even got to keep Fred. A friend got Zucc and one other ferret, and I loaned her some of my *Modern Ferret* back issues so she could educate herself.

As you can see, *Modern Ferret* has greatly affected my ferrets' lives. If it weren't for your magazine, I still would be mistreating my babies. Now I have four happy weasels. You have a great blend of humor and educational resources. I love the "Pink Noses" section, as well as the "Ferretted Fairy Tails." The advice is always useful. Keep up the good work!
Yours truly,
Jennifer Hunt
(and Abbi, Cori, Kali, and Fred — the ferrets)
Michigan

Thank you for taking the time to let us know how Modern Ferret *has helped you and your ferrets. That's the kind of thing that makes all this worthwhile. — Mary*

Dear Modern Ferret,

Thank you for answering my questions in Issue #21. At first, I was skeptical about "fixing" my only unneutered male, Crispity. But, as he went into season, he started behaving *exactly* like you said he would. He also rubbed his behind over everything (including my new carpet). I believe this was his attempt to "mark" his territory.

Anyhow, it seemed cruel not to have him "fixed." It was *obvious* that he was suffering. I hope your response reached other ferret owners who aren't experienced breeders. No animal (even human) should have to endure the immense discomfort we unwittingly put Crispity through.

On your advice, we immediately replaced the cedar bedding with litter made from recycled paper products. When we returned home, a small miracle was waiting to greet us. It came in the form of a badly beaten and malnourished gib. When he spotted us, he ran right into my arms. He seemed to sense the love we held for his warm and fuzzy type. After 2 -3 weeks of TLC (not to mention a constant supply of fresh food and water), his playful nature emerged slowly. At first, we cautioned ourselves not to become too attached. But by the end of the third week it was apparent that this hapless hobo melted his way into everyone's (present fuzzies included) heart. When daily searches to find his original owner came up empty-handed, we eagerly welcomed him to our family. We appropriately named the newcomer "Slash" (because of the battle scars). The entire Ray household truly believes this small miracle wouldn't have happened if not for the help of *Modern Ferret*. We all thank you from the bottom of our hearts!
With Sincere Gratitude,
The Entire Ray Family
Ohio

I'm glad we were able to help. I'm also glad that Slash has found a new happy home. — Mary

Dear Modern Ferret,

I have two ferrets, a male and a female. Streaker is the male (blaze) and Missy is the female (sable). They hated every kind of kitty litter I tried, and I think I tried them all! After watching my daughter's rabbit and noticing how he always seemed to use his food bowl for a litter box, I decided to try rabbit food pellets as a litter for my fuzzies. It works great! It has a naturally fresh smell since it is made of alfalfa, it's highly absorbent and scoopable, relatively cheap and easy to find, and doesn't hurt my babies if they decide to eat some. I also recycle it into mulch for my flower garden and add it to the soil for my houseplants, so it's also environmentally friendly. When my babies decide to have a party in the litter box just after I've cleaned it, it also helps to freshen their coats! I think it is the best litter I have ever used and I hope others will try it and let me know how it works for their fuzzies.
Sincerely,
Kim Greene
Streaker & Missy
North Carolina

Thanks for sending in your idea. — Mary

The Latest Word

CFL Urges Californians to Write to New Governor

According to Jeanne Carley of Californians for Ferret Legalization (CFL), it is not too soon to write to the new Governor, Gray Davis, about the ferret issue. Carley says that under several Republican administrations, the CA Department of Fish and Game (DFG) has run roughshod over the rights of Californians to make their own choice of domesticated pets. She adds that the DFG is a disgrace from the ferret issue to the poisoning of Lake Davis, to the latest internal survey of DFG personnel revealing overwhelming dissatisfaction with the way the agency makes decisions — based on politics, not on science.

CFL asks that Californians take a moment to write a polite letter to Governor Davis asking him to take a very hard look at the fact that ferrets are legal in 48 states. The difference between California and other states is neither the animal nor the people but the DFG. Letters should let Governor Davis know that ferrets should have been legalized a long time ago and that he should take a good look at the DFG's behavior on this and many other issues.

Californians can write to Governor Davis at:

Governor Gray Davis
Governor's Office
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

ATTENTION CALIFORNIANS!

It is up to you to cause your state to change! Write to your governor at the address above and let your opinions be known. You and your ferrets have a right to be heard.

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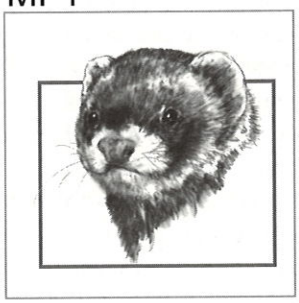

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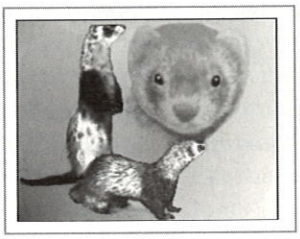

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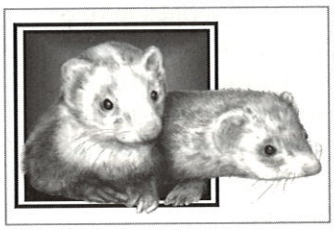

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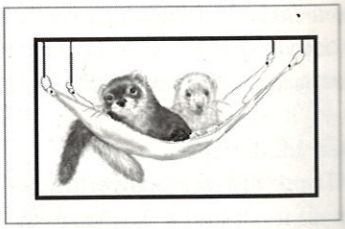

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CONGRATUALTIONS JEANNE!

FUN TRIVIA QUESTIONS:
(1) We all know Tiffany Taylor is on the cover of this issue. Does anyone know who was the **first** person to be on a *Modern Ferret* cover?
(2) (Other than Mary) What person has had their photo in two issues of *Modern Ferret* with dramatically different hair color?
(3) Where are the trivia answers? (try page 68)

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READER QUESTIONS READER ANSWERS

QUESTION (from Issue #16):

My two little bundles of joy are carpet diggers. Any suggestions on how to stop this before they rip up the carpet?
—Rosalynn Barone and Evo & Nuggets

ANSWER:

From Mark and Melanie Simmonds, via e-mail

Our solution to keeping the ferrets from scratching under a closed door is a plastic runner or carpet runner. You can buy it in any home store such as Lowes, Home Depot, or HQ. It costs about $5.00 for a three-foot length and comes in many colors. We cut it to fit around the edge of the door and some around the corner of the doorframe. The ferrets can scratch at it until they are content, but it doesn't damage the carpet and it gives them a "scratching fix." Since it is cheap, when it is worn we just replace it. Also, it works great for carpeting the cage.

QUESTION:

My vet says it's OK to use Advantage or Frontline on my ferret. In the summertime, my ferret likes to go on a leash and play outside. Are these products safe for my ferret?
—Donna K.

ANSWER:

Although these products have not been tested on ferrets, ferret owners have used the products, under the direction of their veterinarians, with no problems. Advantage and Frontline are similar in that they are both applied topically. But Frontline is water-resistant and Advantage is not. Some veterinarians are more comfortable recommending Advantage because it can be washed off more easily if there is a problem.

Both Katherine E. Quesenberry, DVM, and Connie Orcutt, DVM, in *Ferrets, Rabbits, and Rodents: Clinical Medicine and Surgery* (Hillyer & Quesenberry, eds; W.B. Saunders) say that Lufenuron (Program, Ciba Animal Health, Ciba-Geigy Corp., Greensboro, NC) can be used at the dosage for cats, scaled down for the ferret's lower weight. Again, Program has not been tested on ferrets, but thus far it appears to pose no problems.

Some veterinarians feel that it is safer to simply use a flea-and-tick shampoo that's safe for kittens or specifically made for ferrets if your ferret gets fleas. You should *never* use a flea collar on a ferret (even if it is safe for kittens). There is a new flea product available for ferrets from Farnam (see their ad on page 27) which we have not had a chance to try yet (it is still winter as we are doing this issue). Fleas can cause serious health problems in ferrets and should be addressed immediately.—Mary

QUESTION (from Issue #21):

The question we'd like to have answered isn't really a problem, it's more of a curiosity. Crispity (6 - 7 months old) was purchased from a breeder. He is the only one who hasn't been "fixed." We are wondering whether the other ferrets sense the difference? Tux, our first gib, seems to be more aggressive towards Crispity than Warp9. Also are ferrets harder to train if they haven't been fixed?
— The Rays and the Fab Four: Tux, Reese, Warp9, and Crispity, Ohio

ANSWER:

From Linda Harrah, Ferret Sense Shelter, Ohio

The Rays ask if unneutered ferrets are harder to litter train. Yes! Over the years I have found that male kits that I kept for breeding would stop using their litter pans when they came into season, even if they were very well trained previously. When they were retired and neutered they would once again use their litter pans.

I have also found that most males will not use those little corner pans that many pet stores sell for ferrets. Mine prefer an oblong cat pan.

QUESTION:

I currently have 10 wonderful little fuzzies. The newest was added at the beginning of January. Since then, I have been battling with ECE (Epizootic Catarrhal Enteritis or Green Slime). How do I stop this from happening in the future? This is the fourth time I have been through a battle with ECE. The first one was the worst. All 10 ferrets, except the baby, Katona, the carrier, came down overnight with violent ECE symptoms. I lost two fuzzies (R.I.P. Kamelot & Klondike). The others pulled through OK. The next two additions brought back a very mild case of ECE to miscellaneous fuzzies as well as to the new babies. All were fine after a week (no medications or fluids needed, just extra TLC with the help of Ferretvite and Pedialyte).
—Tracy Heup, Wisconsin

ANSWER:

It is important to note that not all slimy green diarrhea is ECE. I'm not a veterinarian, but I suspect that not all of your ferrets' episodes of diarrhea were ECE. Stress can cause very similar symptoms (lack of appetite, green slimy diarrhea and resulting lethargy); introducing a new ferret causes stress. If a ferret has an underlying condition, diarrhea resulting from any kind of illness can be too much for his system to deal with, and then you have a very sick ferret. Influenza can cause symptoms similar to ECE. Coccidia also produces symptoms like ECE, and it is very

Reader Questions/Reader Answers is a place where Modern Ferret readers can exchange information and learn from one another. This is your opportunity to share what you have learned in your experience with ferrets. You don't have to be a ferret expert — we all learn from each other. Something you have observed or discovered about your ferrets may help the next ferret owner.

If you have an answer or a suggestion for any of your fellow ferret owners, write to us. Make sure you tell us what issue the question is from and whose question it is (for example: Issue 13, John Smith's question). We'll print as many questions and answers as we can in each issue. Now is your chance to help your fellow ferret owners in an informal forum.

Letters may be edited for length, clarity, and grammar.

common among young ferrets. The best way to address concerns about coccidia is to isolate the new addition until you have had his or her stool tested. Ferrets can get coccidia more than once, but ECE does not recur. According to Bruce Williams, DVM, who is doing continuing research on ECE, ferrets that have had ECE appear to be no longer susceptible to the virus (that is, they are immune to subsequent infection). Thus, the likelihood that your ferrets have had ECE four times is slim. More commonly, green slimy stools have some other cause. Of course, all diarrhea, no matter the cause, must be treated aggressively with forced or monitored feedings and administration of fluids to prevent dehydration and its complications. For ideas on how to reduce stress in ferrets, see the article on page 28. — Mary

QUESTION:

I have a 17-month-old true albino (white with red eyes) gib named Chakota (Cho-a). He is very lively and at times very mischievous. He is an important member of our family and we are having a grand time with him, but find it is difficult to keep him truly white. He loves mangos, papaya, and carrots and picks up their colors occasionally. What can we do? Also are there any things we need to know that albinos are more susceptible to? I don't let him spend too much time in the sun, because I heard that albinos sunburn. Is this true?

—Starr McGehee, Missouri

ANSWER:

Albinos have no pigmentation, so they can pick up some color from foods they eat or from hormones. Most albinos take on a yellowish tinge, especially as they age. There are some whitening shampoos specifically made for ferrets that you can use to help keep Chakota's coat whiter. But remember you should not bathe him more than twice a month. You will also want to cut back on some of the treats that are causing him to change color. In general, treats should be kept to a minimum. If he's taking on the colors of these treats, he's probably getting too much.

Ferrets are carnivores. Although they may like the taste of various fruits and vegetables, they are not built to extract nutrition from them. Thus, fruits and vegetables generally pass through their system relatively unchanged. It is generally not recommended to feed your ferret hard fiber items (such as carrots) since there is a possibility that a piece of undigested carrot could get lodged in his system and cause a blockage (which is a serious problem).

Albino ferrets do not pose the same kind of challenges that albinos of other species do. They don't really require any special care beyond what you would provide to a ferret with pigmentation (a sable, for example). Ferrets of any color should be kept out of the sun because they are very susceptible to heatstroke; their ability to keep themselves cool in hot weather is limited. — Mary

QUESTION:

I am under the impression that ferrets are very social animals and they are friendlier when you have more than one. Well, I want another one, but my parents are skeptical. What are the pros and cons to having more than one ferret? Plus, if we were to get another fuzzy, what gender would be most agreeable with my male?

—Erin Wiedower & Columbus, Texas

ANSWER:

Single ferrets can enjoy the companionship of their owner, provided the owner is available several hours a day to entertain and interact with the ferret. Certainly ferrets enjoy the company of their own species as well. How friendly a ferret is depends more on his individual personality and how he is treated and handled by his owner than it does on the number of ferrets in the household. In my experience, ferrets seem happier when they have another of their own kind with which to play and sleep. Of course, having more than one ferret means higher care (food, supplies) and veterinary (vaccinations, examinations) expenses as well as more poop to scoop, more ears to clean, and so on.

All pet ferrets should be neutered (spayed/castrated). Once a ferret has been neutered, he will likely get along fine with another ferret of either gender. If at all possible, bring Columbus with you when you choose another ferret to see which one *he* likes, since he's the one who will be living with the new ferret. — Mary

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—Anonymous in California

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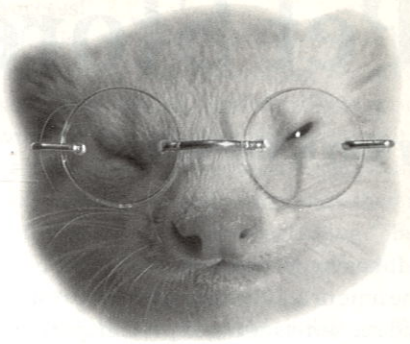
Marshmallow Explains It All

A Hair-Raising Experience



Lest you think I am the uncommon exception among ferrets, let me state at the outset that there is none more typical than I. I am susceptible to the same misfortunes as any other ferret. I groom my fur one leg at a time, just like everybody else.

It is the unfortunate consequence of this grooming which I shall discuss in this column. Despite the best efforts of my humans, I found myself suffering from the dreadful discomfort of hairballs in my stomach. Before you torment yourselves regarding your own best efforts (O! Imperfect Homosapiens!), note that ferrets are by their nature a bit weasely and are exquisitely equipped to outsmart even the most learned human. Frequently I surreptitiously aided other ferrets in their grooming regimens; my humans erroneously believed that if I was not personally shedding then I did not require administration of a hairball remedy to help the loose fur pass through my delicate digestive tract. Humans take note: When one sheds, hairball remedy for all.

Several months ago, I began to have intermittent diarrhea (the horror!). I even vomited once or twice. My humans took me to the veterinarian, who prescribed antibiotics. My condition improved while I was taking the medication, but soon after I finished the full course of the antibiotic treatment I began to show symptoms again. At this juncture, an x-ray was taken which indicated that there was indeed "something" in my stomach that required removal. My veterinarian performed the surgery, removing two reasonably sized hairballs from my stomach. (I won't address the other condition that he found whilst he was exploring my internal organs; the editor discussed that frightful thing in the last issue.) Suffice it to say that my stomach was not itself for some time after.

If you should observe in your ferret symptoms of a partial intestinal blockage, bring him to your veterinarian. The following signs are indicative of partial blockage: intermittent diarrhea or poorly formed, narrow stools; vomiting — even once or twice; a change in eating behavior (a tendency to eat smaller meals or refuse treats). All ferrets groom themselves and other ferrets; therefore, all ferrets are susceptible to a partial intestinal blockage caused by hairballs — regardless of whether they have a propensity for swallowing foreign objects. Observe your ferrets keenly and act when action is required.

I leave you with this bit of wisdom: It is far better to keep your hairballs in a vial on the mantle than to keep them in your stomach.

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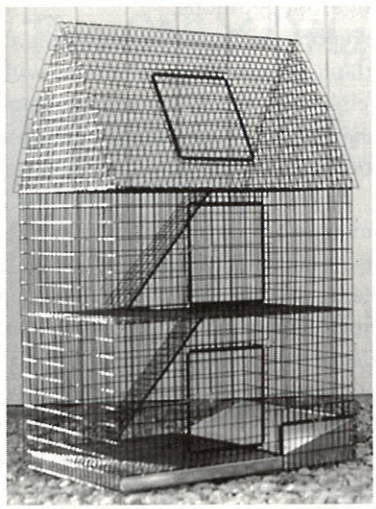

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Pet Store Patrol

by Mary R. Shefferman

The Pet Store Patrol is not looking to create hardships for stores, but to work with them to improve conditions as much as possible.

It has happened to almost all of us at one time or another: we go into a pet store and see ferrets being kept in inappropriate or poor conditions. Maybe the food dish or water bottle is empty or maybe the ferrets are being kept in an aquarium or in cedar woodchips. Maybe the ferrets have inappropriate toys. Many ferret owners will approach someone at the store to point out the problem. In some cases, the manager is receptive to the suggestions about how to keep the ferrets; in other cases, suggestions are met with resistance. Long Island's AFC-A Ferret Club, Inc. (AFC), based in Babylon, New York, has organized a Pet Store Patrol committee, which allows club members to work together to get a pet store to house and keep the ferrets appropriately. "It's all teamwork," says Jessica, the committee's chairperson.

The Pet Store Patrol committee was formed when it became obvious to the AFC board of directors that there was a problem that could not be solved without a better organized effort. Various members would complain about pet stores, but as individual people they simply couldn't influence a store to change. "We formed the committee a little more than a year ago," says Jessica, "and since then we've done a lot." AFC President Nina Trischitta adds, "It was something that was needed. Even if we can only make one change, we have to try."

Any club can organize a Pet Store Patrol to help improve the conditions of ferrets sold in pet stores in their area. Even if you don't have a club in your town, you can work together with other ferret owners in your area to help educate pet store management. The key is how you approach the pet store. While many pet stores are reluctant to listen to members of a club lecture them about the proper care of ferrets, most pet stores are somewhat receptive to what paying customers have to say. "It's important that they think we're just a general consumer," says Jessica.

The Pet Store Patrol is based on the idea that a pet shop manager/owner will usually make changes to the store if enough customers demand it. When a customer complains about the way the ferrets are being kept and then leaves without purchasing anything, the manager/owner can see the direct relationship between the way the ferrets are being housed and the lost sale. When several customers come in and do the same thing, the point starts to sink in and the manager/owner begins to consider making changes.

How They Do It

Any club member can participate in the Pet Store Patrol, and everyone is encouraged to participate. They go into a store in their area and take note of how the ferrets are being housed, what they are being fed, and what types of toys they may have (if any). If there is a problem, it is up to the club member whether to approach store management at that time. If the member does, he or she sees if the store is willing to make any changes. Then the member calls Jessica and gives a report of what happened and whether the store is receptive to suggestions.

The report can be good or bad — it is all important information to share with other club members. If there's a problem, Jessica will contact other members near the store to go in and talk to the management — as ordinary ferret-owning customers, not as club representatives. Those members then report their experience to Jessica. Jessica continues to send members into the store until they can affect a change.

Jessica has access to the club's membership list so she can contact a member who is near to the pet store she's received a complaint about. "Members can refuse to go to a pet store — I won't push," she explains. There are a few members, like Mike Sachs, who are willing to travel to any store no matter where it is. But there's also the matter of matching up the right member with the right store. "Sometimes one person might not be effective, but a different person with a different approach might get through to the store manager," Jessica explained.

Club members are free to choose the type of approach they prefer when dealing with a store that has a problem. They are asked not to identify themselves as club members, but there really is no right or wrong. The tactic AFC members use most often is to go into a store that has already been identified as a having a problem, pick out merchandise, complain about the ferrets, then leave without purchasing the merchandise if the store manager/owner is not receptive to the suggestions about the ferrets. Some people are more comfortable just trying to talk to the manager/owner without going through the motions of picking out the merchandise. AFC never asks members to do anything they are not comfortable doing.

AFC Vice President John Punzi takes the concerned customer approach to the limit. "I go in, check out the ferrets, and then I grab a whole bunch of stuff off the shelves like I'm buying it. Then I go up front. Usually — 99% of the time — it ends up in an argument and I just leave the stuff on the counter and say, 'I can't buy from you,' and I walk out." The majority of the stores have eventually responded positively to the stream of people going in and complaining about the ferrets. "I guess after so many people going in, it sort of gets through to them," John says.

But it's not enough to talk to a random store employee; you have to talk with a manager. "You have to get to the person who the sale matters to — the manager, the owner, not just a salesclerk," Nina explains.

There are some approaches that the Pet Store Patrol discourages. Even when the ferrets are in bad conditions, Jessica asks members not to buy the ferret as a way to remove it from the situation. "The problem is, if you buy the ferret, they'll just replace it." That can create a worse

problem where the store has no incentive to improve conditions because they're still able to sell ferrets despite the poor conditions.

Some members are reluctant to get involved with the Pet Store Patrol. Even Nina admits, "It's hard for me or most people to approach a store manager with a complaint when you know it may end up in an argument — until you look into the ferret's eyes. Who else is going to help them? When they're out of water and the wood chips are in the dish. You just can't help but say what you have to say."

Even if the club member doesn't say anything to the manager, they can still look around and let Jessica know what they see. AFC relies on its general membership to check out the stores in their area and let Jessica know how the stores are — good or bad. Nina says, "You're going into the store anyway, so why not just report back to us?"

The Rationale Behind the Approach

"We try to do it from the point of view of the consumer, because the consumer means dollars, and dollars are the only things a lot of pet stores respond to," Jessica explains. Nina says, "You have to be the consumer and you have to be a ferret owner. You have to have merchandise in your arms to put down. That's when the point gets across." The message is: "If you don't take care of your animals, you won't get my money." AFC feels that managers and shop owners tend to respond to that sort of approach.

Some pet store managers/owners become defensive when approached by members of a club who tell them that they think the store is doing something wrong. Nina says this is because the pet store often considers itself the expert — they're supposed to be educating the consumer, not the other way around. But when a regular person talks about something they read or how they keep their own ferrets instead of presenting himself as an authority on ferrets, the store manager/owner feels less threatened and may be more likely to listen. Despite these efforts, there are still pet stores that refuse to change. John says, "I don't come off strong and nasty; I try to come off as nice as a can." But most of the time the response he gets from store managers is: "I've been selling ferrets for X number of years, I know everything about ferrets." In those cases, the Pet Store Patrol persists in sending in members until someone finally gets through.

Nina emphasized that the Pet Store Patrol is not only about trying to change stores that don't have proper set-ups for ferrets, it's also about letting club members know which stores are doing things right. Jessica agrees, "I would rather point out the good — the pet stores that keep ferrets the way they should be kept." When a store gets a good review, AFC members can choose to patronize that store instead of one that has some problems. It's simply a matter of providing the information that members need to choose to spend their money with stores that show concern for ferrets. Although Jessica gets more calls about stores doing something wrong, the number of recommended stores has increased.

Another point Nina makes is that the Pet Store Patrol is not looking to create hardships for stores, but to work with them to improve conditions as much as possible. AFC tries to be sensitive to the concerns of the pet shop manager/owner and tries to offer alternatives that everyone can live with. For example, a store may be asked to use recycled shredded newspaper bedding (e.g., Care Fresh) instead of cedar or pine chips if they feel that providing blankets is impossible.

Success!

Jessica says the Pet Store Patrol has changed the way some of the pet stores keep their ferrets. Jessica tries to work with each store individually — even if it is part of a chain. "Sometimes the stores are very responsive and sometimes they're not. You just have to keep trying." But AFC has seen changes in pet stores they've contacted.

Both John and Nina agree that the Pet Store Patrol has been successful. John believes that getting as many people as possible to go into the store to complain is part of what makes the effort a success. "It's not just one person, it's a handful of people that go in to bust chops," he says. Nina says, "You know that some listen because some stores have changed for the better." She adds, "You have to insist and be persistent."

Even if the changes are hard to come by, Nina says that it's worth the effort. She adds, "You have to take one step at a time. You can't change the world all at once. Some stores you just have to keep going in."

A Ferret Club (AFC) can be reached at P.O. Box 6248, N. Babylon, N.Y. 11703. Or call 516-957-2612 (Nina) or 516-242-9863 (John). E-mail: ferretsafc@aol.com

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Trixie's Tips™

Sometimes when your ferret is sick, your vet will want him to take prednisone to help him feel better. A lot of vets can give you liquid prednisone instead of pills. The liquid is flavored so that it doesn't taste bitter (prednisone is really bitter!). But if your ferret doesn't like how the flavoring tastes, it can be hard to get him to take it. A lot of medicines come in just one flavor, but liquid prednisone comes in different flavors. Hardly anyone here likes the grape flavor, but the cherry flavor is a big hit. So if your vet wants your ferret to take prednisone, ask if he has more than one flavor or if he can order another flavor. You can also get a prescription for PediaPred and get it at a pharmacy if your vet doesn't have a flavor of liquid prednisone that your ferret likes.

It's *really important* to check with your vet about the right dosage of prednisone to give your ferret. Different liquid prednisone brands could have different concentrations (we had one that was 1mg/1ml and another that was 1.34mg/1ml). Remember that you shouldn't stop giving prednisone suddenly. Talk to your vet about slowly cutting down the dosage when taking your ferret off prednisone..

Other medicines can often be flavored or given with a treat. Make sure you check with your vet before you mix a medicine with a treat to make sure it won't change the way the medicine works.

Why put more stress on a ferret who doesn't feel good? See if you can find medicine he doesn't hate.

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Vaccine Reactions: Two Years Later
Running Out of Luck

by Mary R. Shefferman

Two years ago at vaccination time, our Sabrina and Knuks had reactions to the distemper vaccine (see *Modern Ferret* Issue #9, page 39). Sabrina's reaction wasn't severe: she vomited, but responded quickly and well to steroid treatment. Knuks' reaction was severe. She had to have intravenous fluids and steroids and it took her a few hours to regain consciousness. It was several days before she was feeling like herself.

Last year, we decided to pre-treat both Sabrina and Knuks with a combination of long- and short-acting steroids (our veterinarian gave the ferrets the steroids about a half-hour before giving the vaccination). We decided it was better to try to vaccinate than to forgo the vaccination, considering that canine distemper is fatal in ferrets. Neither ferret had a reaction to the vaccine. (See *Modern Ferret* Issue #16, page 15.)

This year, we decided to try the pre-treatment regimen again. We figured that since everything went well last year, we should have no problem this year. We were partially right: Sabrina was fine. But only a few minutes after her vaccination, Knuks started having a reaction. Her skin (nose, gums) turned bright red and she began to have bloody diarrhea. Dr. Horowitz and Dr. Ulrich and the entire staff at Massapequa Pet Vet are to be commended for their quick action and wonderful care. This time, Knuks was much better within about an hour. Her color and temperature were back to normal and she was acting almost like her pesty self. Had Knuks not been pre-treated with steroids, she might have had a reaction as severe as — or worse than — she had two years ago. We took her home and she had to take prednisone and Kaopectate for several days. She was sleepy, bruised (besides being a tiny ferret, Knuks' veins had collapsed, making inserting the IV a challenge), and shaved on three legs and her neck. But she is alive and healthy.

We cannot stress enough the importance of waiting at your veterinarian's office for at least 30 minutes after a vaccination in case your ferret has a reaction. In addition, you should watch your ferret closely for 24 to 48 hours after the vaccination, because reactions can occur several hours later. It is normal for a ferret to be a bit sleepy for about a day after a vaccination, but if your ferret doesn't perk up after that time, you will want to consult with your veterinarian. Contact your veterinarian immediately if your ferret vomits, has diarrhea, or refuses to eat. Keep Benedryl (diphenhydramine) alcohol-free liquid on-hand in case of reactions at home. If your ferret has a vaccine reaction at home, call your veterinarian first. You can give your ferret 0.5 to 2.0 mg/kg of Benedryl (approximately 0.2 to 0.8 ml for a ferret up to approximately 2.5 pounds). Ask your veterinarian about the correct dosage for *your* ferret before you leave the office after a vaccination.

Many veterinarians also recommend not giving the distemper and rabies vaccinations at the same time. The most common schedule is to vaccinate for canine distemper and rabies two weeks apart. If your ferret is showing any signs of illness, wait until he is better to vaccinate him. You veterinarian should examine the ferret before vaccinating him, but it is important that you tell your veterinarian if you've noticed anything unusual in your ferret's behavior, eating habits, or stools prior to the vaccination appointment.

A ferret that has had a previous reaction to a vaccine should always be observed closely. Having had no reaction with the pre-treatment last year didn't mean that Knuks was OK this year. Be watchful and prepared.

MARTIN'S CAGES

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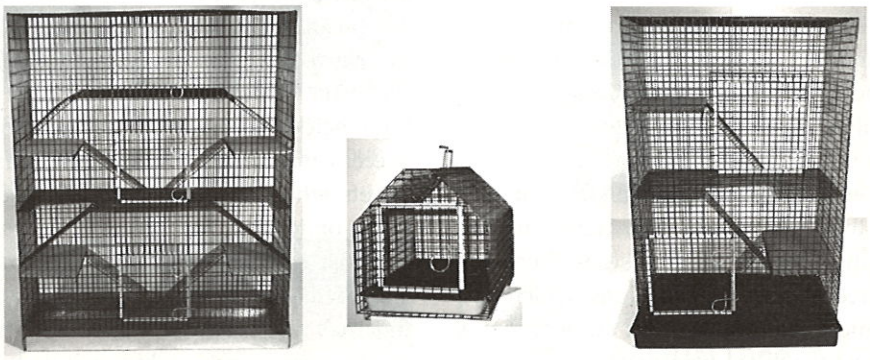

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New Advances in the Treatment of Adrenal Tumors

by Charles Weiss, DVM

Adrenal gland tumors are one of the most common conditions we see in clinical ferret practice today. The adrenal glands are two small glands inside the abdomen, one next to each kidney. Normally the adrenal glands produce several different hormones that the body requires to sustain life. When there is a tumor of the adrenal gland, the tumor produces an excess of the hormones estrogen and testosterone. It is this excess of hormones that results in the myriad clinical signs present in this condition, which results in a poor quality of life and ultimately can be life threatening to the ferret. Adrenal tumors have an equal incidence in male and female ferrets, and are more commonly benign (75%). When these tumors are malignant they can be locally aggressive (get large and grow into nearby structures and organs), but they are rare to spread. In the majority of cases it is not the tumor that results in the clinical signs, but instead the hormones produced by the tumor.

The clinical signs present in this condition include hair loss (figures 1 and 2), lethargy, muscle loss, swollen vulva (figure 3), return to male sexual behavior, straining to urinate, aggression, itchy skin, strong musky odor, and a thin wax-paper appearance to the skin. Of these clinical signs there are three classic clinical signs which are almost diagnostic of an adrenal gland tumor when present alone or in combination. The classic clinical signs include hair loss, swollen vulva, and return to male sexual behavior. The hair loss can occur anywhere on the ferret's body and is generally bilaterally symmetrical. The most common areas of hair loss include the tops of the rear feet, over the base of the tail, and over the shoulder blades. The swollen vulva occurs in the female spayed ferret and can be quite dramatic. It is common to see an associated vulvar discharge and secondary bacterial infection. Return to male sexual behavior occurs in the neutered male ferret where the ferret tries to mate with spayed female ferrets or other neutered male ferrets. These patients may drag another ferret around by the scruff of the neck.

The accepted treatment of choice in the ferret with an adrenal gland tumor includes surgical removal of the tumor(s). Surgery in the hands of an experienced ferret surgeon has a high success rate and carries a good prognosis, whether the tumors are present on one or both adrenal glands. Although the prognosis with surgery is good, recurrence rates can be as high as 10% to 15%. Previously in ferrets that were not good surgical candidates (due to age or concurrent disease) medical treatment consisted of Lysodren®. This drug kills off the adrenal gland, which can result in a decreased hormone production. In the ferret, this drug is associated with a high incidence of side effects and a low success rate. As a result, in the past, ferrets who were poor surgical candidates or too old for surgery had few options: surgery with its associated risks in these patients; medical therapy that may make them sick and that has a poor success rate; or living out their lives with this debilitating disease.

Recently there are some new, safe medications available to humans for breast and prostate cancers that give us great hope for ferrets afflicted with this common condition. We are currently doing clinical trials with three such drugs to try to determine their safety, efficacy, and optimal dosage for adrenal tumors in the ferret. The three drugs under investigation include Lupron®, Arimidex®, and Casodex®. These medications decrease the production and block the actions of testosterone and estrogen. As a result, they can potentially reverse the clinical signs of this condition (figure 4). Preliminary results have been very promising. Although these drugs may prove very effective in reversing the clinical signs associated with this disease, it is likely that treatment will be lifelong as it is not yet known what effect these drugs will have on the adrenal tumor. In other words, at this time we cannot say that this is a cure for adrenal tumors, but a way to alleviate the symptoms in ferrets that are poor surgical candidates. With further clinical trials with these and other such drugs it is hopeful that we will someday be able to dramatically increase the quality of life of ferrets afflicted with this disease who are not surgical candidates. Currently surgical removal of the adrenal tumor is still the treatment of choice in the young, healthy ferret that is a good surgical candidate.

Such clinical trials can be slow and expensive, and we are relying on private donations to keep the work going. I would like to personally extend a special thanks to all who have contributed to enable us to pursue the medical treatment of adrenal gland tumors in the ferret. This is one of the most common diseases in the ferret, which has a profound effect on the ferret's quality of life. Although much still needs to be done, we have made

Figure 1: Ferret with an adrenal tumor with the classic symptoms of hair loss, lethargy, and muscle loss.

The classic clinical signs include hair loss, swollen vulva, and return to male sexual behavior.

great strides in the medical treatment of this condition in the ferret. Please direct any inquiries to Dr. Charles Weiss.

Dr. Weiss practices in Potomac, Maryland, and treats an average of 15 to 20 ferrets a week. He has spoken to numerous ferret associations and has written many client-oriented reviews of various ferret diseases. In addition, Dr. Weiss has lectured at national veterinary conferences and has published the largest clinical studies to date on adrenal gland tumors and insulinoma. His work on insulinoma and adrenal gland tumors is well respected, as he regularly consults with veterinarians nationwide on the diagnosis and treatment of such conditions.

Editor's Note: Donations for this research should be directed to: Charles A. Weiss, DVM, Potomac Animal Hospital, 10020 River Road, Potomac, MD 20854.

If your veterinarian has questions about this research, he or she can contact Dr. Weiss at the address above or at 301-299-4142.

For *Modern Ferret*'s experiences with adrenal tumors, see issue #10, pg 24 Adrenocortical Adenoma: Sabrina's Adrenal Surgery. For other articles, see our topical index on pg 74 of this issue.

Figure 2: Ferret with an adrenal tumor — hair loss, lethargy, itchy skin.

Figure 3: Ferret with an adrenal tumor with a severely swollen vulva (anus is above vulva).

Figure 4: Same ferret from figure 2, five weeks post Lupron®.

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Funny Ferret Tricks

Here are this issue's batch of Funny Ferret Tricks. Does your ferret do something special for a treat? Does he make you laugh? Tell us all about it, and you could win a Ferretude T-shirt from Eight in One Pet Products, not to mention your 15 minutes of fame. See the Contests Page (pg. 69) for more details!

Story by: Shelly McAllister of Pennsylvania
Trick by: Chloe

Of my three little ones, Chloe gives me the most headaches. She's a marked white: sweet, beautiful, intelligent, and deaf. She has learned many hand signals, but loves ignoring them. When I sign "no" she will dance around and hiss at me. I can never stay mad at her when she's being bad. She's just too darn cute.

She normally leaves hiding the toys to her brother and sister, but there is one toy that she keeps putting in the most inconvenient place: my printer. I have a pretty big desk. There is a cabinet on one side where the printer is kept. Chloe climbs in the back hole where cables and cords pass through. With her is always this gray fuzzy thing she stole from one of our cats. Once in the cabinet, Chloe shoves the toy inside the printer. Every time I take it out, Chloe jumps around and hisses at me. Then she will tug on the toy until I let go of it and proceed to either hide it somewhere else, or put it back inside the printer. Whenever I want to print something I first have to make sure there is nothing in my printer!

Story by: Wendy Eubanks of Wisconsin
Trick by: Feris

My male, Feris, does this really funny thing with his toys. His favorite toys are little hard plastic balls. He has about 20 of them scattered around the house. Feris likes to bat them around for a bit and sometimes he will take one up a few stairs to push it back down. The cutest thing has to be his desire to place them in the food dishes. Feris will bat a ball around for a couple of seconds, then pick it up, carry it to one of the dishes and put it down. Sometimes he goes to put a ball in one dish but finds the cage door is shut. He then runs to place it into the other cage. He'll put the ball down and then step back to admire his work (I think he's actually counting them too). Some nights I come into my room and there are four to five balls in the tiny dish. One day after I got home from work, I let all the ferrets out as I usually do. Feris ran out of his cage, grabbed a ball, and turned back around to put it in his dish. I swear he was looking at the thing all day thinking, "I can't wait to get out so I can put that thing where it belongs!" It is very cute but also interesting to watch him do it. You can see a definite thought process going on. A ferret's work is never done!

Story by: Brenda Cook of New Jersey
Trick by: Patchaghoulie

This is my four-pound baby — baby seal, that is. We learned the hard way to bathe Patches last. In between tub filling/baths he likes to hang out in the tub. No problem, except that he charges for the tub once he hears it being filled up for the next ferret. He will even climb up on my head while I am bathing someone else! So we have decided to lock him out of the bathroom. Instead he decided to take matters into his own hands, and we caught him stealing the Ferretone and everything else just for spite!

WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!

WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!WIN!

WIN THIS T-SHIRT!

ENTER THE FUNNY FERRET TRICKS CONTEST TODAY!
SEE PAGE 69 FOR DETAILS!

Story by: Debbie and John Morrison
Trick by: Bubba

Here's our four-year-old sable, Bubba, doing what he does best — stealing my leather cheerleading shoes. I'm a high school cheerleading coach and wear these shoes all the time, so they are rather worn out. Bubba had decided early on that these were *his* shoes, not mine. Whenever I leave them on the floor, he takes it upon himself to literally drag them upstairs and hide them in his favorite spot. Under the bed! He does this no matter where I leave them, but only to this particular pair. What a thief!

Story by: Morgan Prins of Minnesota
Trick by: Fergy

My Dad puts an ear of corn out on our squirrel feeder to feed the squirrels. When he comes in the house after putting a new ear of corn on the feeder, he throws the old cob away in the garbage next to the back door. After that, Fergy, my ferret, steals the cob out of our garbage. She then travels down our basement steps, across our family room, through my Dad's office, and to the far corner of my brother's room.

My brother hadn't noticed until, one day while he was cleaning his room he found a corncob in the corner, but he just let it go. A few days later my brother found a corncob in his bed, where he often found Fergy sleeping. By now it was a mystery! Later while my Mom was doing the laundry, she saw Fergy climbing out of the garbage with a corncob and going down the steps. Finally, mystery solved!

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Dear Gabby

YOUR ADVICE FERRET

Dear Gabby:

My mommy wants to get me a brother, but she's worried that boys and girls can't get along. What should she do?

—Brotherless in Seattle

Dear Brotherless:

Since your mommy is just keeping you as pets, you are probably spayed and your new brother will probably be neutered. It's better and healthier for ferrets to be that way if they are not being bred. Altered boy and girl ferrets can all get along. It is important to remember that ferrets are individuals and, just like people, not every two will like each other. It will help if your mom takes you along to choose your new brother—you might even check a local club or shelter to see if there are any nice boys who need a home.

Confidential to Tiffany:

This modeling gig with *Modern Ferret* could be your big career break — it certainly was where I got my start!

Gabby's Tip of the Day:
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STRESS IN THE OLDER FERRET

Irritable behavior is possibly the most common sign of stress.

by Pamela E. Troutman
with input from Bob Church

Stress in ferrets, as in people, is a common experience. Stress can arise when the routine is upset due to unalterable circumstances, and stress can result in health problems. As ferrets get older, stress can become an important health concern. Stress causes external and internal problems in pet ferrets. These problems can be relieved by simple measures that help the animal to live a healthier, happier life.

Many factors can cause a high stress level in a multi-ferret environment. A ferret may become stressed if it has just completed a move with the owners and is now in unfamiliar surroundings. If a ferret is accustomed to being the center of attention, it may become stressed if ignored because of a new family arrival, either pet or human. If the ferret is unfamiliar with other ferrets and is introduced to a new ferret, it may become stressed. If an unneutered ferret reaches sexual maturity and remains for a long time without satisfaction, it can become stressed.

Ferrets can show stress in several ways. Irritable behavior is possibly the most common sign of stress. Lack of appetite and runny feces are often seen. These cases usually clear up once the ferret adjusts to its new environment. Stress can also make the condition of the coat become coarse or wiry. This happens when the ferret is not happy with a change in diet made by the owner or an ingredient change made by the food manufacturer.

What does not clear up without some help is a condition most commonly referred to by ferret owners as "rat tail." Rat tail is a result of stress rather than a skin or coat condition. Treating the ferret for stress instead of trying diet changes, which can cause even further stress, gets better results. Giving the ferret extra amounts of coat conditioners is the wrong approach because most coat conditioners contain high amounts of fat-soluble vitamins that can stress internal organs if the dose is too great.

I had a ferret who got her toenail caught on her cage and, in the process of freeing herself, she ripped out her toenail completely. Within three days, her stress had subsided from the discomfort of having no nail to protect her toe. Unfortunately, her tail went completely bald and she did not re-grow the fur until her next coat change. In this case, there was little I could do to relieve her stress.

I have had 100% success with getting the fur on the tail to grow back when I have made appropriate changes for the ferret's well-being:

Example 1

Rick, Ted, and Peggy Sue had lived together for several years. Rick always had rat tail in the late spring through late fall until the weather grew cooler. I just thought it was the way Rick was. When Peggy Sue developed rat tail after never having it before, I became concerned. Since it is not a contagious disease, there had to be another cause. I sat down one day and watched the activity in the cage. All three ferrets are altered, but Ted still thinks he is a stud (even though he was neutered at five weeks of age). I discovered that Ted "mounts" both Peggy Sue and Rick and neither ferret appreciates it, but they are both getting up in years and don't fight it anymore. Instead, they became stressed and lost the fur on their tails. I moved Ted to his own bachelor pad. Within a week, I could see improvement in Rick's tail and a patch of fur on the tip of Peggy Sue's tail.

Photo by Pam E. Troutman

Stress due to being in a neglected environment caused the "rat tail" (lack of tail hair) seen on this ferret.

Example 2

Bandit was a shaded silver hob (unneutered) who came to me with rat tail and fur missing partially up his

rump. He arrived with a "wife" and six hyperactive kits. No one wants a ferret with bald spots though, especially when he's silver and looks more like an opossum than a ferret. Having Bandit altered and caged alone was the relief he needed. Ten days after his operation and separation, there was a fuzz of silver all over his tail.

Baldness encroaching up the back of an adult ferret is also a sign of adrenal disease. This is a medical condition wherein the adrenal gland produces an increased amount of sex hormones due to a small growth. Female ferrets become more "mothering," sometimes their vulvas swell even though they are spayed, and they may or may not have fur loss on their bodies. Males become more aggressive, even though they too have been neutered. This problem can be corrected 90% of the time with an operation to remove the affected adrenal gland. Consult a veterinarian for details. (Also, see the article by Dr. Charles Weiss on page 22.)

Another possible result of stress in ferrets that is often not apparent to the owner is ulcers. A ferret had died when he was only five years old. This ferret was an unneutered male and had been "in season" for six months before his death. Breeding males tend to lose weight when they are not regularly mated, and some of them take their frustrations out on blankets and stuffed toys for lack of female companionship. In the case of this five year old, his initial autopsy revealed gastric ulcers in his digestive system, along with severe weight loss. He did have a fur ball (1.5 X 0.5 inches in size), but it did not appear to be related to the cause of death. The ferret had been eating and drinking normally before his death. Ulcers may be caused, in part, by stress. However, there are other causes of ulcers in ferrets, including a foreign body in the intestinal tract or bacteria (*Helicobacter mustelae*). Stress does not always cause ulcers. Ulcers do not usually result in death; they can be treated with medications. If your ferret is grinding his teeth or has dark tarry stools, see your veterinarian.

Photo by Pam E. Troutman

Six Ways To Reduce Stress

Bob Church, a zoologist/archeologist and an associate of mine, made several recommendations for relieving stress in ferrets. Many of these suggestions can help ferret owners help their ferrets at home.

Bob explains: "Stressors are normally those things that strike at the 'security core' of the ferret, such as personal safety, lack of food, feelings of being watched, etc., and it is easy to figure out many of them by watching our furry friends' normal behavior.

"One of the most obvious differences between ferrets kept by Americans and ferrets kept by people of other nationalities is in housing; specifically, in providing separate sleeping quarters for ferrets. A typical European hutch is composed of two areas: a play/feeding/toilet area and a sleeping chamber. The open area is often open on two or three sides, but usually the nesting box is completely closed, with just a single opening for ferret access. The ferret knows exactly what this is for and invariably retreats to the nesting box for sleeping or when afraid. American ferrets do this as well, as evidenced by their desire to crawl into couches and drawers, under sofas and generally any dark and enclosed spaces to sleep. This makes perfect behavioral sense if you consider that the ferret's polecat ancestors normally den in burrows.

article continues on page 32

Photo by Bob Church

Bob's ferret Amber demonstrates a ceramic pot converted into a nest box. The pot was decorated with rock texture paint. For more details see page 30.

Photo by Bob Church

Bob's ferret Stella demonstrates a nesting box made out of a cardboard box cut to shape and covered with contact paper. Just a few minutes of your time and some inexpensive materials (which you might already have) can make a wonderful toy!

We build our own nesting box:

The nesting box is completely closed, with just a single opening for ferret access. The ferret knows exactly what this is for and invariably retreats to the nesting box for sleeping or when afraid.

Materials required:
(purchased at Home Depot)
Circular (Round) Bastard File
$5.87 — this tool should last a long time
Ceramic Pots
$4.97 and $9.82
Old newspaper (makes cleanup easier)

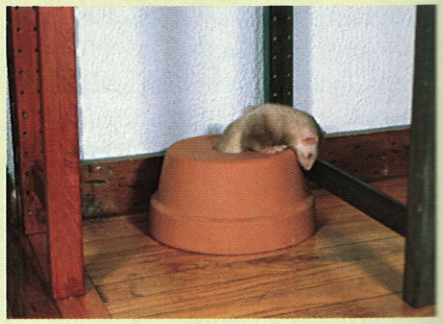
We wanted to try making one of Bob Church's easy-to-make nesting boxes for ourselves to make sure that they are inexpensive and easy to make.

We went to Home Depot (the one near us is open 24 hours) and purchased two ceramic pots (in different designs) and the circular bastard saw.

Plan to spend around a half hour filing away to enlarge the hole (make sure it is large enough to fit your fattest ferret and will allow air circulation). We found that a strong swirling motion (like stirring a pot) enlarged the hole most evenly and smoothly.

We chose to leave our pots with a natural finish for now, but you don't have to — just make sure that whatever kind of paint you choose is non-toxic and decorate away! Bob uses rock texture paint on his (see previous page).

Furnish inside with a soft sleeping blanket and let the fuzzies enjoy!



Trixie tests it out!

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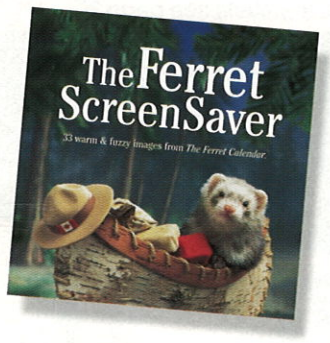

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Photo by Bob Church

Bob's ferret Lady Noir fights with an oven mitt converted into a playful foe with the addition of felt eyes, teeth, and tongue — an inexpensive, interactive play toy!

continued from page 29

"I have built a series of small wooden nesting boxes, approximately 1 foot square by 8 inches tall. I cut a 4-inch circular hole in one side and hinge the roof. The other side of the roof is held closed with a magnetic lock. I put these boxes in the corners I don't want the ferrets to use as latrines. Also, I pull them away from the wall and turn the access hole to the back. They are **very** popular, and once I built enough of them, the ferrets **never** bothered the furniture again. Ferrets will favor certain boxes, and sometimes will pull favorite toys into the boxes. I have noticed scared ferrets dash off to the boxes, and ill ferrets don't seem to want to leave them. I only wish those manufacturers who make ferret cages would include a nesting box with every purchase.

"A second good way to reduce stress is physical exercise. I glue felt faces onto old oven mitts, then put them on over my hands and wrestle the carpet sharks. The ferrets rarely hurt even when greatly annoyed and seriously thrashing the mitt. I sometimes add little jingle bells onto the mitts, and one mitt has a squeaker in the thumb. The mitts are the ferrets' favorite toys, and the physical stimulation is a fantastic stress reliever.

"A third stress reliever is to minimize cage time. Cages are a great source of stress to an animal that is inherently curious and active. Maximize the outside time as much as possible.

"Fourth — reduce distractions. If you leave your cage in an area frequented by people, cover the front with a blanket or turn the cage so outside activities do not create distraction. Also, if you have multiple cages of ferrets, alternate males with females. Ferrets are sexually territorial; that is, males exclude other males but overlap with females. Even neutered animals will respond more vigorously to other members of their own sex than to the opposite sex. Both sexual and visual distractions can be quite stressful to many ferrets, especially those who are already ill, timid, or abused.

"A fifth stress-reduction idea is called touch therapy. Some behaviorists call it grooming; animal lovers call it petting. Whatever you call it, do it as often as possible, especially with sick or injured animals. Light, gentle touching has been shown to stimulate the inner defenses and increase resistance to disease. This works will all mammals. It is also soothing and reduces stress the human might feel. Like humans, ferrets without physical contact can fail to thrive.

"Last, have a cool-down period. Don't expect to let the ferrets out for an hour, then toss them back in a cage while they are still dancing. Let them play until they start to wander off to find a place to sleep. Then pet and stroke them until they: a) start running around again; b) go to sleep; or c) get down to find a better bed. Only after you know they have slowed down should you put them away. This reduces cage stress and helps them to understand they will not be put away early, which will help reduce bad behavior."

Pamela E. Troutman is Director of Shelters That Adopt and Rescue (STAR) Ferrets.*

Bob Church is a zoologist and archeologist who frequently advises ferret owners on the Internet's Ferret Mailing List and has, at last count, 19 ferrets in his home.

To receive a listing of ferret shelters, contacts, vets, suppliers, breeders, clubs, etc., in your state by mail, send a LONG self-addressed stamped envelope to: STAR Ferrets, P.O. Box 1714, Springfield, VA 22151-0714. Visit STAR* Ferrets' web site:* http://www.netfopets.com/starferrets.html.

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Photo by Bob Church

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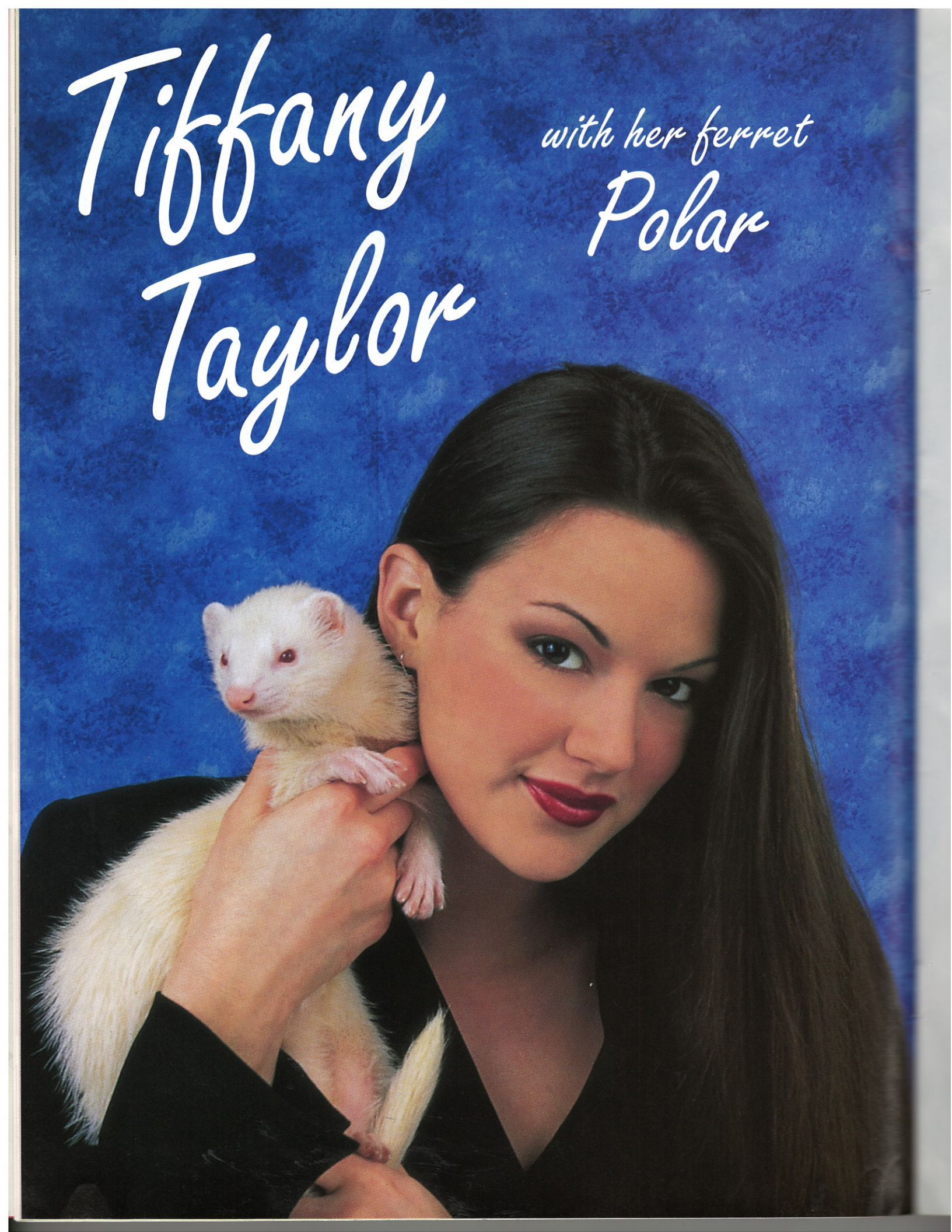
Tiffany Taylor
with her ferret
Polar

Interview by Eric and Mary R. Shefferman
Photography by Eric Shefferman

"I was just waiting to find some ferrets that needed a home that I could adopt."

Tiffany with her ferret, Bear

What do seven beautiful ferrets and one beautiful woman have in common? They've all modeled for magazine centerfolds! We had the pleasure of a visit from Tiffany Taylor, *Playboy* Magazine's Miss November 1998, and her seven ferrets — Beau, Bandit, Jordan, Polar, Killian, Bear, and Diesel. We took the opportunity to turn some of Tiffany's ferrets into little Miss and Misters May/June 1999.

Forget whatever it is you might think about a *Playboy* Playmate. Tiffany is one of the sweetest ferret-lovers we've ever met. No one dotes more on her little bundles of fuzz than Tiffany. From the minute she arrived with all seven of her ferrets in tow, through all the photo shoots and interview sessions, Tiffany constantly demonstrated her affection and concern for her ferrets' happiness and well-being — and the well-being of ferrets everywhere.

The Beginning

Tiffany's ferret story begins like many other ferret owners' stories. She had wanted to get a ferret for a while and she had seen them in the pet stores when she was getting crickets for Little Boy, her leopard gecko. "I always saw them there and I really wanted one. I had been talking about getting ferrets forever, but I knew that I didn't want to buy one. I was just waiting to find some that needed a home that I could adopt," she explains. All seven of Tiffany's ferrets came from situations where they were no longer wanted or the previous owner could no longer care for them properly. She says that if she had the time and space, she would take in every ferret she could so they would all have good homes.

Tiffany got her first two ferrets — the brothers, Beau and Bandit — about two and a half years ago while she was in Atlanta, Georgia, at the Miss Georgia USA pageant. She had found an ad in the newspaper, called, and decided to take in the two ferrets that needed a home. Six months later, Tiffany found out about another ferret that needed a home. Jordan, named after Tiffany's veterinarian, is the only girl of the bunch. Jordan's previous owner had decided that he could no longer take care of her, so Tiffany very happily took her home. The final four ferrets (to date) were also in need of a home. One of Tiffany's friends was permanently babysitting the ferrets for a friend who had gone into the Marines. Tiffany's friend didn't have time to take care of Polar, Killian, Bear, and Diesel, so Tiffany took them in.

As owners of multiple ferrets know, ferrets have a unique appeal that makes us want to have "just one more." Tiffany is no exception: "They're so sweet. They are so much fun. And for whatever reason I just understand how they are and what it takes to take care of them. I just understand ferrets. I figure if I can take care of more, I'll just take them." Is there a limit to the number of ferrets Tiffany would have? "Maybe 15 or so…" she says after thinking about it for a moment, "I think as long as I could take care of them all financially… if I could afford to have them all, buy them the good food and their treats." There's certainly no lack of space in her heart for as many ferrets as she might want.

Tiffany's concern and love for all ferrets — and animals — is obvious in how she handles them and talks about them. But, like many ferret owners, she didn't know very much about ferrets when she first brought them into her home. "I sort of looked into them more and read about them and, actually, I found *Modern Ferret* and read that. I also talked to a lady who had a rescue in Maryland." Before Tiffany brought home Beau and Bandit, she hadn't really heard very much about ferrets; she had seen them and knew she wanted one. "I just tried to read some books and see what I could find out about them. I kind of learned how to take care of everybody through Beau and Bandit."

Other Pets

Ferrets aren't the only pets Tiffany has in her home. She also has her leopard gecko and three cats, Nina, Clyde, and Kitty. Tiffany was 12 years old when she brought home Nina from a shelter in Virginia. Clyde and Kitty are Tiffany's boyfriend's cats. "The cats are deathly afraid of the ferrets. Even though Clyde and Nina are huge. When we go into the ferrets' room to clean or something, the cats will wander in to see what's going on. Nina sees food or hears the food bag that I'm taking in to fill up their bowls and she wants to go in and steal their food. Then she figures out that they're all in there and she freaks out."

Tiffany has nearly always had pets in

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Tiffany with her ferret, Killian

"You can't be cuter than a ferret. You just can't."

Tiffany Taylor

and her ferrets
Beau and Killian

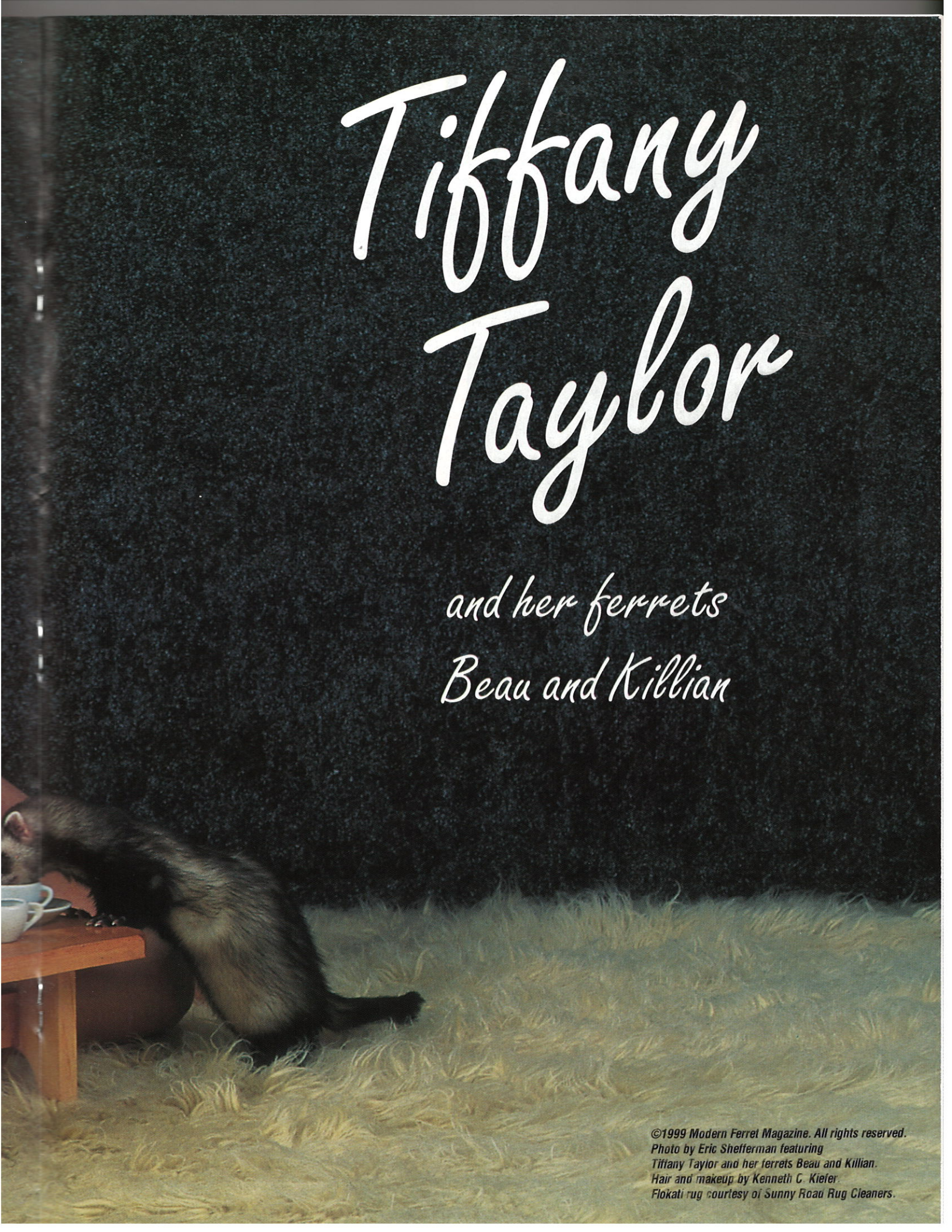

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Photo by Eric Shefferman featuring
Tiffany Taylor and her ferrets Beau and Killian.
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her life. When she was growing up, her family had dogs (Dobermans and teacup poodles) and cats. Tiffany also had parakeets and fish. "It was really exciting with the fish because the fish had little babies. That was really cool."

The Magnificent Seven

Like all ferrets, Tiffany's ferrets love to play. One of their favorite "toys" is a brown knit hat that used to belong to Tiffany's boyfriend. She confesses, "That was Jon's hat that I sort of stole and gave to them." The ferrets have other neat toys, too: "They have little plastic balls with little bells in them. Then they have this big cardboard tube, like a shipping tube. They have the crinkly bag with the fabric on it that they really like — a lot. Any plastic bag or box, they get very excited about."

For ferret playtime, Tiffany closes off an area and lets the ferrets run around the living room by the computer. "When I do my e-mails they run up and climb up and help with the e-mails." When she's finished keeping up with things in cyberspace, "We just sort of chase them around and they run around and get all excited. I like to roll them over and rub their tummies. They chase the cats around when the cats come near them."

Each of Tiffany's ferrets has his or her own qualities that make him or her special. "Polar is very persistent about getting into someplace he wants to be." Polar is Tiffany's albino ferret, who likes to get in the cabinets and then crawl up inside to sleep on the dishtowels. Of course, he brings other ferrets with him. "Diesel is obviously exceptionally cute because he's so fat and he has those bug-eyes." All seven ferrets are mostly good about getting baths, except Bear. "Bear is really strong so he climbs out of the sink or the bathtub or up your arm." Jordan doesn't like men, but she'll climb up Tiffany's boyfriend's clothes all the time. Although all of the ferrets get along and sleep together, Diesel and Bandit especially like to play all the time, with Bandit dragging around Diesel. As for those belly rubs, Diesel particularly likes them.

One of the best ways to spend time and bond with your ferrets is to offer them treats (at least the ferrets think it's one of the best ways). Tiffany's ferrets all like the same kinds of treats: Ferretbites (especially the banana-raisin flavor), raisins, cucumbers, oranges, and Frosted Flakes. "They will fight me for some Frosted Flakes. I went through a Frosted Flakes phase for a while, and they'd always try to steal them. So they'd get *one*." They also go crazy for Ferretone and Ferretvite.

Stealing things is high on any ferret's list of favorite activities. Tiffany's ferrets like to "borrow" some traditional ferret favorites as well as some not-so-traditional things. "They like to steal really weird things like bathing suits." And what's a thief without a place to stash the goods? In Tiffany's old apartment, the ferrets modified her new bed to create a hideout. "The ferrets tore a hole in the black fabric on the bottom of the box spring." At the time, Tiffany was gathering up bathing suits to take pictures for her web site. Her partner had gotten a bunch of bathing suits from someone, so Tiffany was trying them on to see if she could use any of them. "The ferrets would steal half of the bathing suit and drag it into the box spring. So when we moved, I took the black fabric off and there were raisins everywhere." Other favorite targets were Tiffany's tennis shoes. They liked to take just one. The ferrets still steal shoes. Some ferrets will get under Tiffany's feet to distract her while others will take the shoe and run away.

Although Tiffany has temporarily

"The ferrets would steal half of the bathing suit and drag it into the box spring."

Tiffany with her ferret, Jordan

TRIVIA NOTE: Some of you may have seen this dress before!

reached her ferret quota, that doesn't stop her from thinking about getting more ferrets. Our own Angora ferret, Koosh, was a really big hit with Tiffany (and he certainly didn't mind the attention.) She says, "I definitely want to get an Angora ferret now." Usually, Tiffany isn't concerned with the kind or color of the ferrets she brings home: "It would be nice to have different colored ones like a cinnamon or a panda or a blaze, but it doesn't really matter. As long as they're healthy and they're nice and they get along with everybody, I don't care what color they are."

Tiffany with her ferret, Beau

Family, Friends, and Co-Workers

Not all ferret owners have family that likes their choice of pet. Tiffany is lucky to have a family that loves her ferrets. "Everybody *loves* the ferrets. *Loves* them. My Dad loves Polar. I think he forgets every time he sees them that I have an albino. He says, 'Oh, look at the white one,' and he gets all excited." She tries to bring one or two ferrets to any family event. The children in her family like to play with the ferrets. "Everybody likes to play with them and hold them," Tiffany says. "My stepmother always teases me and says I'm going to end up like Bridget Bardot, out on an island with just a bunch of animals."

Often, ferret owners influence others to get ferrets — whether actively or just by example. But Tiffany is very careful in that regard. "I'm sensitive about how they have to be taken care of. I probably discourage a lot of people who like animals because I don't think they would do as good a job as I think should be done."

Working in the modeling field, Tiffany meets different people all the time. She hears the same kinds of questions and comments that all ferret owners hear. "Everybody wants to know why I have so many ferrets. Then they ask all the regular questions: 'Do they stink?' 'Do they bite?' 'Aren't they mean?' And you have to say, 'No, they're really nice.' And then you go through the whole thing about what they eat and that they don't poop everywhere."

Modeling — It's All in the Family

Many people have to work to put themselves through college. Tiffany is working to pay her tuition and to try to set up a little nest egg for the future. Her work with *Playboy* helps pay her way. "The nice thing about doing all the work with *Playboy*," Tiffany explains, "is that it's given me a lot of money. I can take in all these ferrets and take care of them. Otherwise it would be — not a struggle — but I would be working much, much more than I was to make sure they'd have everything they need. So at least it lets me give a good home to a couple little guys — thanks to *Playboy*." Tiffany also takes advantage of *Playboy*'s tuition reimbursement program.

The ferrets benefit in other ways from Tiffany's modeling work. "I get all kinds of T-shirts and stuff when I go on promotions. I just give them all to the ferrets."

Tiffany says that she always had an interest in *Playboy*. "I sort of always wanted to be in *Playboy* — because everybody thinks, 'Oh, *Playboy* Playmates are *so* beautiful.' In actuality it's just makeup, lights, and angling that does it all. You don't know that unless you're doing an actual shoot." Tiffany started out by doing a test shoot for a *Playboy* scout at a pageant. She started doing shoots with the Playboy Newsstand Specials Department, where they publish books of lingerie, college girls, and other kinds of special books, in January of 1997. She did her test shoot for centerfold in January of 1998, and was finished with the Miss November 1998 layout by the summer. "Now I'm back doing shoots with the Newsstand Specials and working on my web site," she says.

Before the work with *Playboy*, Tiffany did some swimsuit and beauty pageants. "I just kind of did those for fun and as a learning experience." As a result, Tiffany is Miss Georgetown in 1997 and American Dream Calendar Girl Miss April 1998.

We wondered if Tiffany's modeling had influenced her ferrets. Have any of them always dreamed of becoming a centerfold model? "Maybe. They did pretty well in the sleeping photos. I guess they're like me — if it's something easy that I want to do like eating or sleeping or drinking soda, I'm perfectly happy to take the pictures. So maybe that's the way they are too. They like sleeping, so they can sleep in pictures."

What would Tiffany's reaction be if her ferrets decided to go professional with their modeling instead of going to college? "I'd tell them they'd have to get their own place and start supporting

Tiffany's Tips

Some ferret folks have no resistance when it comes to getting another ferret. This can sometimes create a little "difference of opinion" with the fuzzy-lover's significant other. How do you convince your S.O. to agree to another furball? Tiffany offers some tips on how to persuade a partner who might be a little reluctant to add to the business. Of course, some S.O.'s have wills of iron and can withstand any pleas for more ferrets.

1. Put on your best sad face and whine about how well you can take care of the ferret.
2. Say over and over how the ferret needs a home and is neglected now and you have the time and resources to take really good care of it.
3. Cry.
4. Don't let go of the ferret.
5. Point out to your S.O. how nice the ferret is and how well he or she gets along with your babies.
6. If you find an ad in the paper for a ferret, cut out the ad and tape it to your forehead — then wear it all day and keep bumping into your S.O. and pointing out the ad.
7. Make your S.O. hold the ferret and point out all of the ferret's good qualities and hope your S.O. falls in love.
8. Try to sneak the ferret into a carrier with some of your babies and take him or her home — then pretend like you don't know how the mistake happened.

Good luck with your new fuzzy!

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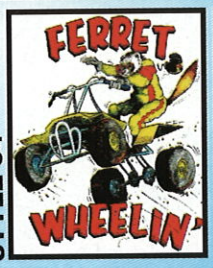

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themselves."

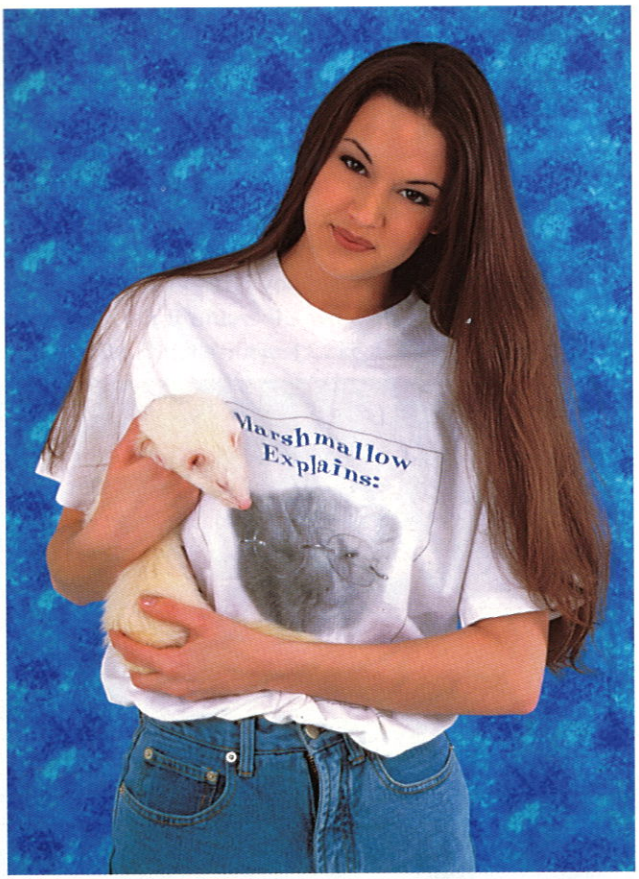
Usually models have to "pay their dues" before they get their big break. A model doesn't start out as a centerfold model, she has to work her way up to it. But Tiffany isn't jealous that her ferrets' very first photo shoot was for a centerfold. "You can't be cuter than a ferret. You just can't. No matter who you are. You can have little blonde curls and big blue eyes and just be the cutest thing on the planet; people would still like them better. You just can't compete with ferrets."

Ferrets are not always the ideal photography models. They don't usually like to sit still, which is something Tiffany does quite often as a model. But Tiffany felt it was easier to *work* with her ferrets than to run after them to keep them out of trouble. "It was much easier because they can be so bad sometimes. They can be so persistent and they'll all gang up on you when you're trying to clean up their papers and put new papers down or clean up a little mess they made or sweep up the floor where they knocked down the food. They were very good. I was kind of surprised." Of course, it helps when you have several people around just to grab a ferret that wanders off the set.

Parents can sometimes be a little upset when their kids decide to pose nude, but as a ferret parent Tiffany has taken her ferrets' centerfold shoot very well. "Look where they learned it from," she says.

The Future

Tiffany's ultimate goal is to finish college to get her degree in criminology. Then she wants to become a police officer. But there are other, short-term goals: "I want to have a house and decorate it. I want to get my web site where it's perfect and ... make money." In the meantime, she continues to do work for *Playboy*, goes to college, and works as a teaching assistant. She points out that she can make better money and do less strenuous work than waiting tables by modeling for *Playboy*. The tuition reimbursement she gets from *Playboy* is certainly a big help for someone who's putting herself through college.



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The Escapades of Ammonia, the (Astounding!) Blind Ferret

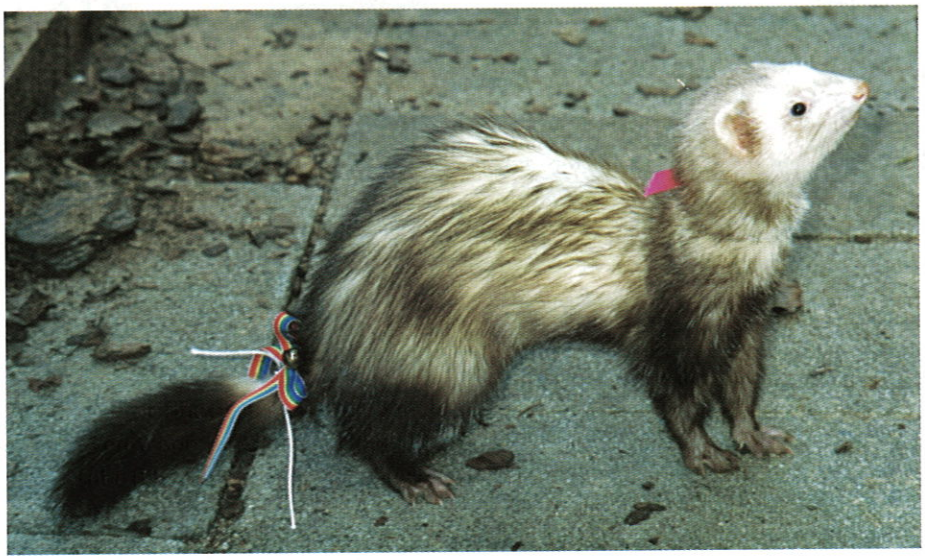
by Millie Sanders

Can I tell you about a blind ferret? There has never been one ferret that could cause as much trouble as six others put together; they can't even compete. I don't know how she does it, where she gets her energy, or what she must be dreaming of to do what she does. Ammonia is an amazing ferret.

I got Ammonia from a pet store when she was a kit. At first she was a biter, but she stopped biting with all the handling she got. She preferred to stay in the cage even when the door was open. I have a tube that connects one set of ferret cages to another and that was where Ammonia preferred to stay and sleep at night. When I opened the cage in the morning, Ammonia would come bouncing out all ready to play. If I stood still, she would freeze, sniff the air, look around, and not move until I spoke. Then she would come bouncing toward me excited and happy and would make a flying leap at me. I would put my hands down and she would leap right into them. There were other little odd things I noticed about Ammonia, too.

When I took her to the vet, he said that although she could detect movement, she could not see. Each time I have gone back to the vet, I have asked him if he is sure. Many things she did made it seem like she was blind. But she could to do too many things that seemed impossible for a blind ferret. I think the vet thought I had a crush on him because I took her there so many times, but he assured me that her eyes had not developed what they needed to be able to see.

I truly believe that Ammonia gets along as well as she does because she started out blind. She went through her kit-hood with the normal amount of energy and curiosity and the inability to sit still. I believe her biting was due to being scared and blind and not knowing what was going on. As she became accustomed to her home here, she tried everything — even more so than Easy Off did. With each new ferret I brought home, she didn't seem to be included in the pecking order. She's just daffy enough to bounce from one ferret to the other, and all of them take her in stride.



Ammonia — Blindness doesn't slow her down

I am all but convinced there is some breeding with a flying squirrel somewhere in Ammonia's background. Despite not being able to see it, she knows where the furniture is to land on it. She can clear distances the other ferrets are afraid to even attempt. I have to keep the barstools upside down. Why? Because if I have them near the bar, Ammonia can wedge between the stool and the cabinet, climb up, and then leap to the bar. Once she's on the bar, well, she has a drinking problem — anything in a glass. If I move the stools farther away from the bar, she climbs the couch, leaps from the back of the couch to the stool, then to the bar. How does she know how far away they are? She rarely misses. And no glass is safe. I have now turned *them* upside down.

I cannot explain how she knows the distance between things like the bar, the stool, and the couch. I have played a lot of games with her, and there are things she won't do. She cares nothing about chasing the squeaky toy that is in a sock tied to a string; she likes to play with the towel when I throw it at her but she won't chase it. But oh the fun of being thrown around in a paper bag, which of course she can hear when she finally runs out of it, circles the coffee table and comes back at it.

None can "ferret" out a Coke — or any drink for that matter — the way Ammonia can.

Ammonia uses her other senses to figure out what's going on. She uses her hearing, but more than that is her sense of smell. I know the other ferrets use their sense of smell too, but none can "ferret" out a Coke — or any drink for that matter — the way Ammonia can. She can either hear the fizzle or she can smell it — or both — and you just can't get her mind off it unless it's watered-down and flat. But it's not just Coke; it's anything in a glass. Ammonia's nose really works a lot. When I come into the room and stop before she knows exactly where I am, she freezes, and her head is up and the nose is going. Normally if I am not "teasing" her like that, she races at me, runs into me with her arms circling me, her head thrown back looking up like she can see me, and then up she comes — nylons, jeans, sweats, whatever. Loud noises don't seem to bother her either.

All in all, Ammonia is at best a pest, but too cute for me to get aggravated with. She wants to be doing whatever I'm doing, and is going to get that attention. She does not mind being picked up quickly or without warning, though a lot of blind ferrets don't like that at all. She isn't afraid of anything. When I first tried to take her out to socialize, she wouldn't come out of her carrier. But on the third visit she finally came out. At one of the ferret meetings, she found a feller and had all of us in hysterics as she chased him all over the house. Round and round they went. Ammonia is *always* the chaser, never being chased. A couple of times she ran into a chair or a wall or even a person, but it was like the little power cars — wheels still going — she just took off in another direction.

Ammonia is the ferret who discovered how to get to the bar by climbing up the skirt of the doll cover that I placed over the vacuum cleaner. So I moved the vacuum to the other side of the room, out of the neat little corner that looks like it was made for a vacuum cleaner. When I moved the vacuum, Ammonia noticed that behind it was the ironing board with a doll cover on it; it had to be moved.

Ammonia leaping on to the bar

Fearless... and part flying squirrel?

Up on the sewing table

There's no such thing as too cute

Since she lives in a world of darkness, you can't get away from her just by turning out the lights!

Using the drawer to get on to the sewing table

Ammonia is the one who discovered that the box of junk under the little table makes a stepladder to the first shelf of the table. Up she goes to the side of the cart next to the table, to the back of the sewing cabinet, bracing herself against the windowpane to push to the top, and then over *to the drink I am consuming while I sew*. I move the glass away from her to set it somewhere else and it's as if she can see that one thing in Technicolor. Move a magnet around a wad of stickpins and you have the same effect as Ammonia following that glass. Pitiful. On the other hand, she has helped me to increase the speed of my sewing: I drop her gently to the floor and, while she races back to the box, I sew like the devil to get as much as I can done before she climbs up again.

She is the one who discovered that if a glass is set up on top of the fish aquarium, she can climb the little table, hop on the recliner, scurry up the afghan, leap onto the light fixture, and make it across to the glass.

I guess what I'm saying is that since she lives in a world of darkness, you can't get away from her just by turning out the lights!

What she has in the way of abilities of flying, determination, and attention span, she loses on intelligence. I have absolutely no trouble finding out how she has gotten into something that I thought was safe. I set her down on the floor and ask her to show me how she did it. She does it step by step, which saves me a lot of time trying to figure it out on my own.

I have had to come up with a few inventions to keep things away from Ammonia. Some of my inventions include: a tray suspended from the ceiling to hold the remote control; another tray suspended to hold a Coke while I sit on the couch; another tray suspended to hold the little things that I want to be by the couch when I want them. So far, I have won on all three of these counts.

Ammonia is not only blind in the visual sense, but she is also very blind to the fact I may not want to play *all* the time. She doesn't understand the word "no" — or any part of it. She chases the other ferrets until they find a place to hide. They can't get away from her unless she decides to go after someone else.

I have read that you aren't supposed to startle or quickly pick up a blind ferret. Well, Ammonia gets scooped up all the time and loves it. She does not nip, but will take me by the little finger and try to lead me under the chair with her — size is not a factor. She climbs up pant legs if she doesn't get the attention she wants, when she wants it. She has 50 times the personality of any ferret I have ever met. You will never know she is blind, even if you move the furniture, which the experts tell you not to do (well, I wouldn't move the furniture if she wasn't using it to get into something I didn't want her getting into).

The only time I really notice Ammonia's blindness is when I stop silently in the room and she can't seem to find me even though I'm right in front of her. Also there are times she is running toward me and I step to the side. She passes by me and I ask her where she is going. The U-turn is smooth. But she doesn't fall for that one like she used to.

I can also take Ammonia to strange places and she can get along well enough not to have to worry about it. I keep asking the vet, are you sure she's blind? And he says "absolutely."

Ammonia is certainly different than the majority of blind ferrets but I really mark that up to the fact I had her

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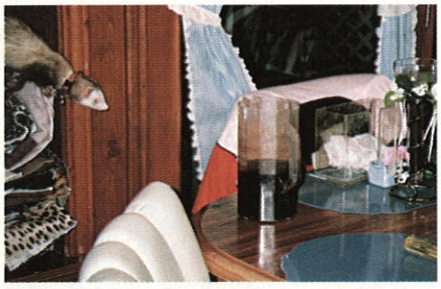
straight from the pet store and I played with her so much. She has all the self-confidence (and/or stupidity) any ferret needs.

Millie Sanders is a ferret owner from Dallas, Texas. Millie became involved with the ferret community after taking early retirement in April 1998 from being a claims litigator for an insurance company. She has seven ferrets at this time: Easy Off, Ammonia, Cascade, Ajax, Dizzy, Joy, and Prell. She refers to them collectively as "The Cleaning Crew." She is active with The Ferret Lover's Club of Texas, writes character tales on the Internet's Ferret Mailing List (Easy Off/Oscar romance), and currently is designing and making ferret hammocks, sleep sacks, and pouches for the benefit of various ferret shelters. You can e-mail Millie at: MEGS55@flash.net

1 — up on the bay window sill...



2 — the jump from sill to table...

3 — Ammonia takes her "prize"

FOR OTHER ARTICLES ON BLINDNESS IN FERRETS SEE:

Issue #14 Page 58
Becoming Blind: Seymore's Story
Issue #14 Page 60
Sabrina's Loss of Sight

Issue #17 Page 15
Sabrina Says: Be Nice To Ferrets Who Can't See You
Issue #17 Page 54
Cataracts In Ferrets

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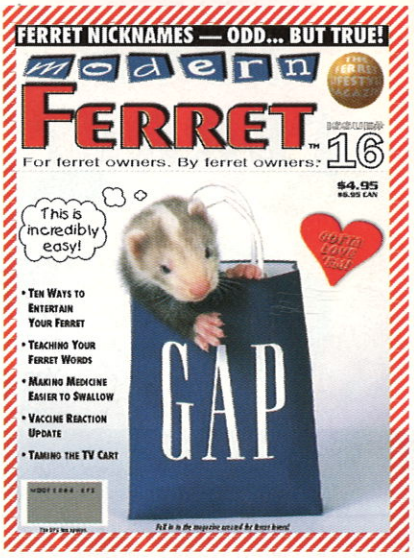

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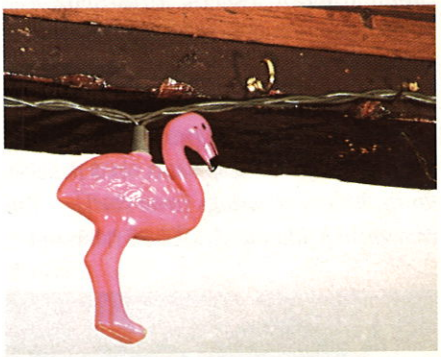
FUN WITH YOUR FERRET

The Swinging Basket!

by Megan O'Shaughnessy, D.C.

photos by Eric Shefferman (featuring our ferrets)

We hung our hanging basket from a hook in a ceiling beam between the living and dining rooms. Yes, we do keep a flamingo light set up all the time...



The swinging basket was very inexpensive and easy to set up and, as you can see from the photos, really excited our ferrets Trixie, Bosco, and Balthazar.

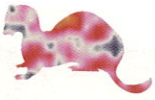
I keep my ferrets' toys (when they are not being stashed) in a wicker Easter-type basket. A few months ago, we started a new game where I would put one or more ferrets into the basket and then swing them back and forth. Then the idea struck me … why not? A hammer, a nail, and a long piece of cord later, the Ferret Swing was born!

I put a nail into the top of the middle of the doorway between my room and the bath. The nail works fine, but you could use a plant hanging hook or something similar. Then I tied one end of the string to the basket, made a little loop in the other end, and —presto — instant swing! To spice things up a little, I put a couple crinkle sacks and a jingle ball in the basket.

The basket hangs a couple of inches off the floor. My ferrets seem more comfortable having the basket as low to the ground as possible. Depending on the cord you use, it may stretch under the ferrets' weight (mine did), so you may have to adjust the cord length to suit. It may be best to choose a string that's non-stretchy like fishing line or chain, though I have not experimented with it yet. Occasionally, my ferrets seemed a bit unnerved by the (relatively minor) bounciness of the basket on the string when they tried to stand up in the basket or do other things that required some balance.

Some of my ferrets seem to like a non-swinging swing (however, they will go to all kinds of lengths to try to get a toy out of the basket!), while others will swing in the swing for a while with an astonished look on their faces like, "Hey! What's this?" I play a game with them where I gently swing the basket just a foot or so, and kiss at them when the basket comes in reach of me. It's *so* cute. Still other ferrets aren't too keen on swinging in the basket but will go into major break-dancing craziness after they jump out of it!

Megan O'Shaughnessy is from Rockport, Washington. She got her first ferret, Grover, at the end of August 1998. Megan's ferrets are Grover, Onyx, Loki, Satinka, and Cherry, plus a new kit who doesn't have a name yet. Four of the six are shelter ferrets and/or rescues. The fuzzies are watched over by Megan's steadfast feline friend, Cinnebar. He still thinks the ferrets are strange alien creatures, but Megan has found that recently, he meows plaintively at her if she deprives him of the opportunity to observe the aliens from a safe distance. Megan is a chiropractic physician and has started her own clinic in Concrete, Washington. Previously Megan was a software engineer/MTS for NASA.



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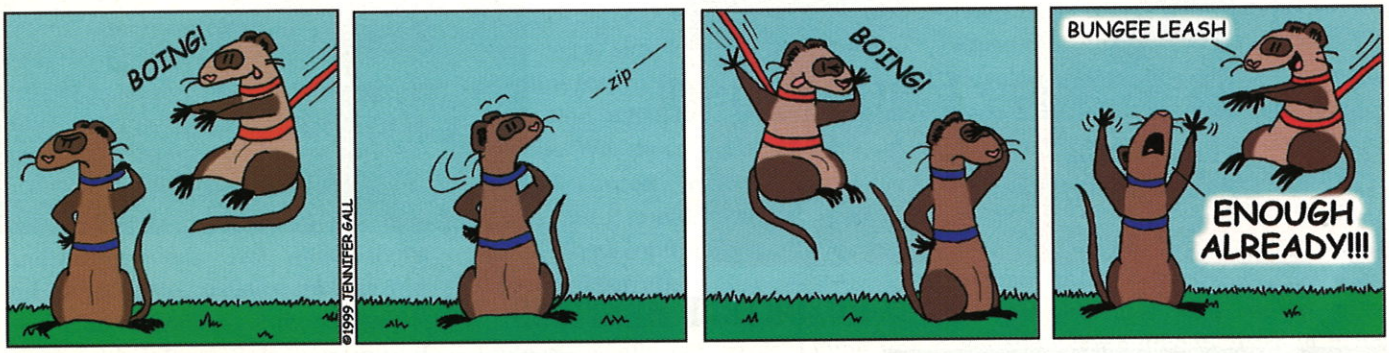

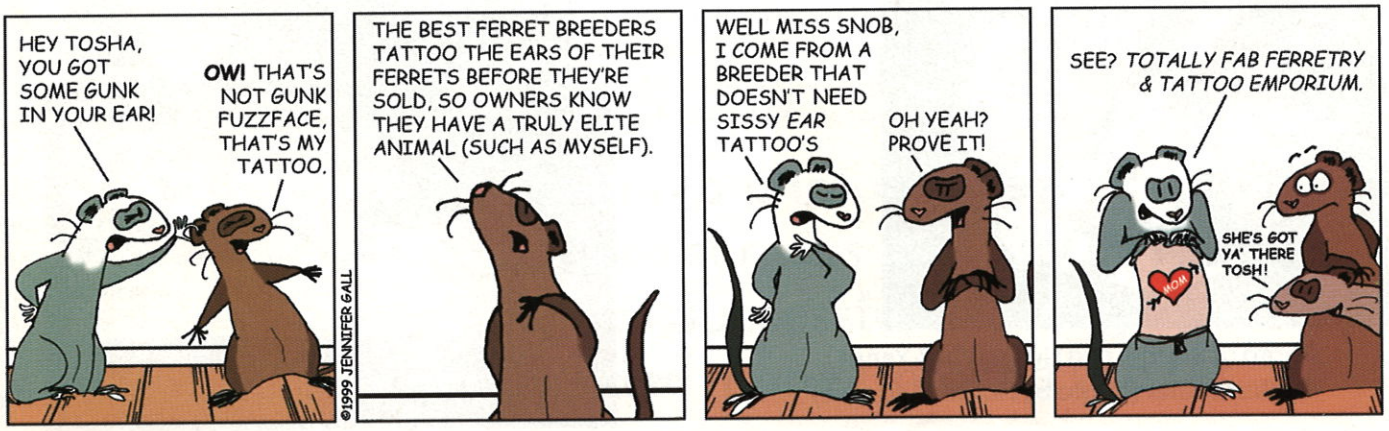
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SEE? TOTALLY FAB FERRETRY & TATTOO EMPORIUM.
SHE'S GOT YA' THERE TOSH!
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SOUTH FLORIDA FERRET CLUB & RESCUE'S FUNTASTIC FERRET FOTO FRENZY WINNERS

1

Photo of Rusty and Pixxel
©1997 Pam Greene

2

Photo of Bella
By Margaret Williams

3

Photo of Oso with Chelsie (dog)
By Kym Isear

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Photo of Sophie and Nellie (Yin & Yang)
By Bill Gruber (photo by Ronnie DiComo)

Photo of Sky
By Lorne and Redora Cleaver

CLUB & SHELTER FUNDRAI$ING

AND THE WINNERS ARE...

by Michael Janke

"This is too cool!" was the response from one of the winners in the South Florida Ferret Club & Rescue's "Funtastic Ferret Foto Frenzy." Who wouldn't be excited about having a photograph of their ferret being declared one of the best of the bunch? Not to mention knowing that the photo would be appearing in the best ferret magazine around, *Modern Ferret*! Throw in a prize or two for the winners and it's a combination that's hard to beat.

If your shelter is anything like ours, you spend a great deal of time trying to fund the rescue and shelter work. It's never an easy task and one may spend almost as much time trying to pay the shelter bills as caring for the ferrets.

The South Florida Ferret Club & Rescue has used many different methods for raising funds, from garage sales to ferret sponsorships to walk-a-thons. These have all worked well in the past and we still use them every year. But fundraising is a never-ending task, and we're always looking for new fundraising ideas. The walk-a-thons and garage sales usually involve our own club members and, while the membership is fantastic in their support of the shelter, they can't always carry the load. We decided that we needed a fundraiser that would reach out much farther than local ferret owners and members of our organization.

We all know how much ferret lovers like to show off their "kids." What better way to reach out and involve ferret owners across the country than a photo contest where they could do just that? Most ferret lovers are sure to have at least a dozen (probably more!) photos of their ferrets and they like nothing better than to show them off to others. Not everyone can enter his or her ferret in a ferret show — if one is even lucky enough to have a show within a reasonable distance. A photo contest is not quite the same, but it gives one a chance to show off his or her ferret. Unlike with a championship show, with a photo contest it doesn't matter if the ferret has a broken canine tooth or its body doesn't quite conform to the "standard." If the photo is cute, unusual, or funny, it has as good a chance of winning as any other.

With the popularity of the Internet, the participation level of the Ferret Mailing List (FML), and our shelter's own web site, we knew we could easily reach thousands of ferret folks at almost no cost. All we needed to do was set up the rules of the photo contest. The rules were very simple and outlined the deadline for entries, who was eligible to enter, and what type of picture was eligible. We chose a straightforward, general contest with no particular theme, but it could have just as easily been a theme contest (for example, Best-Costumed Ferret).

Every contest has winners, and winners usually get prizes. Lining up prizes was our next task. We didn't want to have to buy the prizes since that would hamper the financial success of the event. "For Ferrets Only" donated a Condo Cage and Custom Commode™ litter pan for first place and a photo album with a small ceramic-like ferret, called a Ferritsie™, on the cover for third place. Carin Riley, who originally brought up the idea of a photo contest, offered to take care of the second place award. Carin would make and donate a full set of custom fitted bedding for the ferret winning second place and a ferret blankie for each of the honorable mentions.

As another incentive to enter the contest, we arranged with Eric and Mary to have the three winning photographs published in *Modern Ferret* along with this article. We were sure this alone would encourage more people to enter the contest.

Contestants could send in as many entries as they desired as long as one entry fee accompanied each photo. We knew the fee had to be reasonable. We decided to count on a large volume of entries instead of a large entry fee for the contest to be financially successful. We determined that five dollars was a reasonable entry fee, and entrants must have felt the same because some sent in as many as five entries!

After the rules were set up, prize donation commitments were in hand, and the cost of entering decided upon, we had the information necessary to put together an ad on our shelter's web site at www.miamiferret.org. We e-mailed Bill Gruber, moderator of the

Having a photo contest as a shelter fundraiser was not only a lot of fun, it was successful in bringing badly needed money into the shelter.

Unlike with a championship show, with a photo contest it doesn't matter if the ferret has a broken canine tooth or its body doesn't quite conform to the "standard."

FML, to get the okay to repeatedly post an ad for the contest in the FML. Bill assured me that it would be okay. We wanted to keep the contest fresh in the minds of all the FML readers with a periodic reminder, but we didn't want to go overboard and post the ad too often.

Officers of our organization would judge the photos, which would remain visibly unmarked so judges would not know who sent the photo until the winner was determined. Since our club officers are not professional photographers, each judge would simply pick what he or she thought was a great ferret photo. After each judge picked his or her favorites, the others would be eliminated and the process would be repeated until only three winners and two honorable mentions remained.

Our next job was to sit back and watch the entries roll in. We started advertising the contest about 45 days before the deadline and we were getting a little nervous during the first few weeks of the contest. The number of entries seemed slim at first, but as we humans are prone to do, many waited to the very last minute to enter and we got quite a few entries near the deadline. It probably didn't help that the contest deadline was relatively close to the Christmas holiday and we decided at the last minute to extend the deadline by a little over a week. There were many who expressed an interest in entering but just had not found the time because of the holidays. Tip: If you want to have a photo contest, it would be best to plan for a less hectic time of year. That's our plan for next year!

After the deadline had passed, the officers agreed to meet on the following Sunday for judging. The photos were laid out over a number of tables so the judges could examine them all and pick what they felt were the best. This was undoubtedly the hardest part of the entire contest and one could hear, "Ooh, look at this one" and plenty of other oohs and ahhs as we looked over the photos. All of the photos were wonderful and it was almost impossible to choose the top three. Many elimination rounds later, we decided upon the photos accompanying this article. Every photo entered was a winner in our eyes and we wished we could declare them all first place winners. Each one of the entries gets an honored place in a photo contest album and no photos will be discarded. They mean a lot to us and we know they mean a lot to those who entered them.

First Place was awarded to Pamela Greene's "Pixxel and Rusty." The Second Place winner was Margaret Williams' "Bella," and Third Place was presented to Kym Isear's "Oso" shown playing with "Chelsie" the dog. Honorable mentions were given to Bill Gruber's "Sophie and Nellie" and Redora and Lorne Cleaver's "Sky."

Having a photo contest as a shelter fundraiser was not only a lot of fun, it was successful in bringing badly needed money into the shelter. We hope to host a photo contest each and every year for many years to come, and hope other shelters find this a useful tool for their fundraising efforts. I would love to see this happen, because as an officer of South Florida Ferret Club & Rescue, Inc., I was not eligible to enter our contest and I just know I have the winning photo in the hundreds of photos I have of my kids!

Michael Janke and his wife have had ferrets since 1986 and currently have three ferrets: Beasley, Spaz, and Penny. Michael is Secretary of the South Florida Ferret Club & Rescue, Inc., a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, and he is the editor/publisher of their Ferret Footnotes *newsletter. He is also the webmaster for the shelter's web site:*
http://www.miamiferret.org
Michael also maintains the adrenal/insulinoma website at:
http:www.miamiferret.org/fhc
Michael's e-mail address is:
mjanke@miamiferret.org

If your ferret club or shelter has a great fundraising idea, write it up & send it in! Your idea could help ferrets around the world!

Modern Ferret
Magazine

Better ideas to help ferret owners come from fellow ferret owners!

For ferret owners. By ferret owners.™

Has your club or shelter come up with an innovative way to raise funds?

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Your ideas will help clubs and shelters everywhere be able to take better care of ferrets!

Write to:

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Smithtown NY 11787

Letter Writing

1/31/99

PETA
501 Front Street
Norfolk, VA 23510

Dear Director,

I am not sure that I will be renewing my PETA membership this year. I was very concerned by a letter that appeared in Modern Ferret magazine. This letter was written by Erica Meier of PETA. While I agree that many domestic ferrets have been victims of the pet industry, I must point out that cats, dogs, and other pets have also been victimized by the pet industry. Yes, many ferrets make their way to shelters. However, so do many cats, dogs and other pets.

I am disappointed in the misinformation given in the rest of the letter from a representative of an organization that I have put my faith and trust in. The domestic ferret is not a wild animal. As a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, I have spent hundreds of hours working with wildlife. The statement in Ms. Meier's letter that "Ferrets are not domesticated animals" is false. It is equivalent to stating that pet rabbits are identical to jackrabbits, or that a collie is the same as a wolf! I am in agreement that animals captured from the wild (e.g., prairie dogs and flying squirrels) should never be kept in captivity unless they are unable to be released back to the wild. However, the domestic ferret does not exist in the wild, nor could it survive in the wild. I would challenge Ms. Meier to back up her statement with actual facts. The domestic ferret has existed for hundreds of years. Where do all these so called "wild domestic ferrets" exist? What are they eating? Where are they living? Where are their colonies? What makes them wild? Has she ever seen any?

In addition, I was very concerned when I read about an incident here in Wisconsin in the last year where someone had released mink and some ferrets into the wild. I can only hope that if PETA is involved in any rescue activity such as this, they have the good sense to research the species they are releasing and make sure that domestic animals go to a shelter and not into the wild, where they will surely die of predation or starvation. This would be a terrible irony for an organization that promotes itself as a protector of animals.

Thank you,

Susan S. Saliga
Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator

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In our November/December 1998 issue (*Modern Ferret* #19), we ran an article on pages 56 and 57 in which our ferret, Ralph, wrote to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and requested information on ferrets. The key points in the letter PETA sent back to us were:

1. "...just because 49 states allow ferret to be kept as companion [*sic*] does not mean that ferrets should be kept as companions."
2. "Ferrets are not domesticated animals; their real home is in nature."

We here at *Modern Ferret* strongly disagree with both these statements. Apparently, many of our readers do as well — we've received many letters from people such as the one above (which was sent to PETA). Since then, there have been several anti-ferret comments in the media, including an anti-ferret statement written by a PETA representative in an issue of *Jane* magazine.

It is obviously up to us ferret owners to keep writing letters which encourage organizations such as PETA, The Sierra Club, and the National Audubon Society to stop their anti-ferret propaganda. They are using their resources to harm **your** pets — and they often do it with **your** financial support!

We ran some tips on letter writing and facts about ferrets in Issue #21 on page 56 to help ferret owners write better letters, and we will continue to do so in the future. For this issue, we decided to publish a copy of the letter above from Susan Saliga to help demonstrate what a well-written letter looks like. Watch for more letter writing tips in future issues.

Sabrina Says:

Keep Your Ferret's Nails Trimmed

Keeping your ferret well groomed keeps him healthy and happy. One of the important grooming tasks is nail clipping. If you don't keep your ferret's nails trimmed, they can split and get caught on blankets or on the ferret's cage. If this happens, the ferret can pull off his nail, which hurts. Sometimes the nail is so badly damaged that it doesn't grow back. Long nails can scratch people and other ferrets. Also, if a ferret has to walk around with really long nails, his toes will be forced to turn sideways, which can lead to permanent damage.

Trimming your ferret's nails is really easy. All you need is a nail clipper and something the ferret likes to lick (Ferretone, Ferretvite, NutriCal). Put a few drops of Ferretone or a little dab of vitamin paste on the ferret's belly or on a clean surface (such as a spoon or a tongue depressor). While he's busy licking off it off, you can trim his nails with little or no fuss.

When clipping the nails, make sure you don't cut the quick (the red vein inside the nail). It's really easy to see since ferret nails are light colored and translucent. If you do cut the quick, you can put some styptic powder (available at a pet store) or flour on the bleeding tip of the nail, or you can dig the nail into a bar of white soap (Ivory). If you're not sure how short you can cut your ferret's nails, just trim off the longest part and do the nail trimming more often. Usually trimming your ferret's nails once a week is enough, but some ferrets need nail trimming more often, others less often.

Attention Ferret Lovers: Mark your calendars!
For the ferret event you won't want to miss!

FERRET SHOW **Date: July 24, 1999** FERRET SHOW

Location: Leesport (near Reading), Pennsylvania

Leesport Farmer's Market

to benefit WarmFuzzy Ferret Rescue

There will be 14 show rings for albino, blaze, chocolate, cinnamon, dark eyed white, mitt (two rings), mutt, panda, sable (two rings), siamese, and silver (two rings).

Fun events will include most yawns, most kisses, paper bag escape, best dressed, tube race, Hot Wheel push race, can tipping, best trick, best decorated cage, bobbing for ice, stockings, heaviest and lightest (male & female), longest whisker, longest and shortest tail, and unpotting the flower.

The judging starts at 10:00 am and there will be educational seminars throughout the day.

Proof of distemper vaccination must accompany all ferrets. Only healthy ferrets will be permitted entry.

Pre-registration will be required to show your ferret (but not for the fun events or educational seminars).

There will be plenty of vendors on hand with a wide variety of ferret items for sale. Many of these items can not be found in stores, so be prepared!

For pre-registration information or other show information, contact WarmFuzzy Ferret Rescue at **(610) 926-9087** or e-mail to warmfuzzy@aol.com.

Reader Viewpoint

by Eric Shefferman

Last issue we shared a bit from a letter from subscriber Laura Aulito; however, there are some additional points that she made in her letter that we thought should also be shared. Laura writes:

"Very sorry to read about Ralph. We've put down the last of our first 3 babies over the last year (Trouble 7 yrs, Chewey 6yrs, we lost Timber at 2 yrs of age due to a lack of proper ferretproofing). We have 6 others: Docible, T2, Spotacus (our 1st boy), Feroci-Kiss, Bubble, and Gooey (the last 3 adopted). Gooey has had adrenal surgery once but has lost her hair again. Obviously, as long as she is holding weight and enthusiastic for life I'll give her vitamins and supplements. We'll also be there holding her paw and stroking her head when she's too tired to fight anymore. Nothing is better for survivors than for the people to have staggered aged pets, so we always have more babies to shower love on to — even a ferret that has lost their soulmate and might want to be alone and join their lost one can't escape from several other varying age ferrets. *Somebody* is going to be sleeping with the depressed one(s) and that helps keep them involved in life's routine of eating and play."

Thank you Laura for sharing many important points!

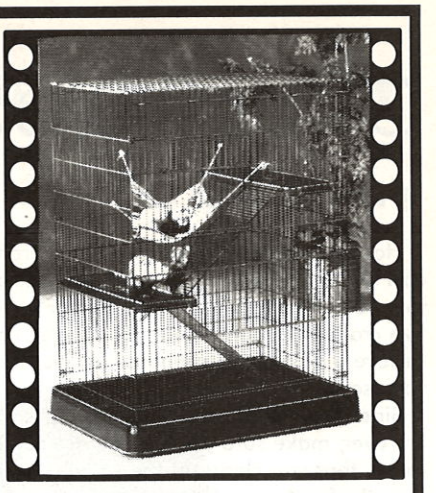
We still miss Ralph very much here. For years I have counted off the ferrets to make sure they were all tucked in by checking for noses and reciting their names in age order: Sabrina, Ralph, Marshmallow, Knuks, etc... I can't help but keep reciting the list like that and then have to remember that Ralph won't be there.

Regarding Gooey's adrenal situation, you should try showing your veterinarian the article from Dr. Weiss on page 22, it may help Gooey be more comfortable.

From our personal experience, I have to agree with you 100% regarding staggered aged ferrets. In his final months, Ralph could not tolerate being around the younger ferrets — he found their play just too stressful for him. We kept him caged separately and kept a constant rotation of companions for him. Sabrina, Marshmallow, and Knuks were all very gentle and supportive for him. Each one would take a turn for a day keeping Ralph company. Despite the rotation, when Ralph was finally gone both Marshmallow and Knuks took the loss very hard. Both would go to where Ralph's cage had been and look for him. Knuks' depression lasted for weeks with her just sitting looking where the cage had been. Fortunately for all of us, around the same time we had acquired Koosh. Koosh's high energy level and outgoing play forced Marshmallow and Knuks to take part in teaching the newcomer the ropes. For us, there was a whole new ferret to teach stuff to and play with. In time, both the ferrets and we people felt better.

Staggered age ferrets also help prevent having multiple ferrets with serious problems occurring at the same time. It can be difficult for an owner to have to deal with constantly feeding or medicating multiple ferrets at the same time, or to have to pay for multiple ferrets' expensive surgeries at the same time.

These are all issues that a ferret owner and their ferret family will have to face at one time or another. Thanks again, Laura, for starting a dialog on this topic.



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Craft Project: Fun Foam Ferrets

by Melissa Taylor

Have you ever wanted to make a craft, but the supplies cost too much money? Or the craft looked like it would take too much time to make? Here's your answer! The following two crafts take only about 20 minutes each to make. And, believe it or not, the supplies cost less than a dollar (unless you use some of the optional items).

Since you will be using foam, and there will be little scraps left over, make sure your ferrets are caged or in a different room, that you clean up the scraps carefully, and that you keep the finished crafts out of their reach.

Ferret Stamp

You will need:

Pattern A
Foam of any color (these are only about 40 cents each and come in sheets)
Scissors
Glue
Thick cardboard or a small wood scrap (you can purchase a small rectangular piece of wood from a craft store if you want to be "professional")
Permanent marker
Piece of paper

Directions:

Trace pattern A onto the piece of paper and cut around the shape. You can make your own ferret outline if you're artistically inclined.

Use the permanent marker to trace the pattern onto the piece of foam. With the scissors, carefully cut out the shape of the ferret from the foam.

Glue the ferret shape onto the piece of wood or cardboard scrap. It's that easy. Press your ferret stamp into a stamp pad and start stamping!

Ferret Magnet

You will need:

Patterns B, C, D, E, and F
Tan sheet of foam
Brown sheet of foam
Scissors
Glue
Permanent marker
Piece of paper
Magnet strip (You can recycle old, unwanted magnets, or you can buy magnet strips at an office supply store. This will increase the cost of the craft.)
Googlie eye (This is optional and will increase the cost of the craft since the eyes come in bags of more than one. But if you plan on making several magnets and love googlie eyes, go for it!)

Directions:

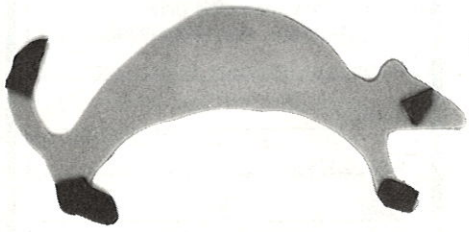
Trace the patterns onto a piece of paper and cut them out. Use these patterns to trace onto the foam with the permanent marker. Piece B should be traced onto the tan foam, while the other pieces should be traced onto the brown foam. Carefully cut out foam pieces B, C, D, E, and F.

Glue piece D next to the front of the head (along with a googlie eye if you have one). Glue piece E to the front foot and piece F to the back foot. Piece C goes on the end of the tail.

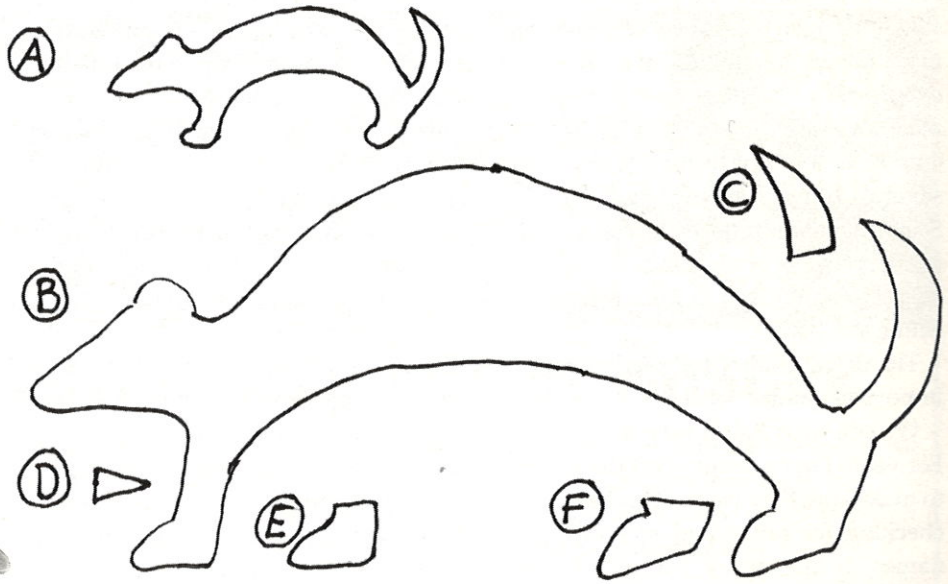
After the glue on the front is dry, flip over the ferret and glue on the magnet strip.

Melissa Taylor attends college and enjoys drawing Barnaby ferret cartoons for Modern Ferret *in her spare time. Her ferret Pepita's favorite toy is a Polartec fleece ferret ball on a cord. But that's another craft ...*

Sample stamped ferret



Sample magnet ferret
(reduced to 50% size)



TIP:
Use a photocopier that enlarges/reduces to make a pattern the size you want (copying this page for the purpose of making craft ferrets is permitted)

Almond Joy's Great Adventures

by Almond Joy
with the help of Barbara Kretschmer

Jaeggernut (back) and Almond Joy (front)

First I should explain that Mommy and Daddy weren't very experienced with 10-week-old babies when my brother Jaeggernut and I came along. You see our other brother, Loki, and sister, Teamot, were already about five months old when they got Mommy and Daddy. Our foster sisters, Ashka, Leewit, and Sonya were all over four years old when they moved in. So Jag and I are full of great fun and surprises for Mommy and Daddy.

No one ever bothered to tell her that she needed to ferret proof the toilet while she was using it!

The first of my adventures happened in the bathroom. Jag and I are water babies. None of our other siblings are. They even hate taking baths, if you can believe that! One day Mommy got lazy and decided to sit on the edge of the bathtub, run the water, and shave her legs like that, with just a top and a pair of shorts on. Well, I kept poking Mommy's butt with my nose (okay, maybe I did nip just a little), and she just kept telling me to go away. But I was frantic. I just *had* to go swimming. Mommy and Daddy are kind of picky. For some reason — something about catching colds — the temperature in the house has to be just right, and the air conditioner can't be on when we want to play in the tub. They also don't like us to get wet too often because we are not neutered yet (we will be when we're old enough) or descented (we never will be). Therefore, we tend to be a little "stinkier" when we're wet. We like it. We think we smell wonderful. I don't know what this "stinky" means, but Mommy said it's nowhere near the smell of a wet dog. However, we love to run around afterwards and dry off on everything. I think we do it because we like everything to smell like us. We think "stinky" smells wonderful and even Mommy and Daddy don't mind it. But Mommy continues to clean and make it smell different.

So anyway, here I am hopping all over the place (at this point with no help at all from Jag), and Mommy's just ignoring me. Well, I took one final leap and accomplished something Mommy said she'd never seen any of us kids do before without the help of the bathmat being on the edge of the bathtub. I landed right in the middle of the tub. Ooooo it was *so* nice. It had filled up just right, about two inches. I raced full-speed ahead to the waterfall coming down from the faucet. Mommy said it looked to her like I was feeling the most wonderful thing in the world as I stuck my nose right up into the faucet and let the water run down over me. Mommy yelled for Daddy because she thought I might drown. But this was so much fun. I guess I really scared her, though, because this is how they found out Jag and I are water babies. After all the trouble I'd gone through to get where I was, they actually picked up Jag and helped him in. Jag and I were having such a wonderful time, so they let us play for quite a while. Mommy said she felt a little silly running around with only one leg shaved while they let us play. You see, that's as far as I let her get. Then they put some really awful smelling stuff called Baby Shampoo on us and covered up our very pleasurable "stinky" smell. Go figure. That wasn't as much fun, but we enjoyed the attention anyway. We promise not to go too far if they would only turn us loose at the water park! Oh, some bubbles would be fun too. Mom is checking into bubbles that might be safe for us to play in, something that won't dry out our skin so we can play in the water more often and not get that nasty Baby Shampoo put on us.

My next adventure came one night when Mommy and Daddy were eating dinner. Daddy was sitting on the couch and had his plate on the coffee table. Daddy wouldn't share, and I didn't see Mommy's plate. I tried all the begging techniques I had learned so far, but they just weren't working. You see, Mommy and Daddy are very picky about what we eat. We eat a high-quality ferret food with a little high-quality cat and kitten food mixed in. Mommy and Daddy do this because if we ever get sick and they need to change our diet, it will be easier for us to accept. Our treats are limited and they only give us the things that are good for us, or at least won't hurt us. But come on! They tell us *we* have to share, and it smelled really good. Daddy had a big plate with corn on the cob and a lot of this really good smelling stuff called butter melted on it. Okay, so the begging wasn't working. Before Daddy knew what was happening, I made two really big leaps (I'm very good at it, if I do say so myself) one onto the couch and one leap straight into and through the butter. Boy was Daddy surprised! Mommy and Daddy were laughing as I slid right through and off the plate. I didn't get to eat the corn, but I did get to lick a substantial amount of butter off myself. I'm glad Jag was off playing other ferret games or he would have wanted to help. When I was done and all cleaned up, I decided to give it another try. Daddy saw me coming this time, but let's face it, our humans are very slow, aren't they? This time I landed on Daddy's other plate. Right in the middle of an open-faced Sloppy Joe sandwich! Yeah! I did it! Mommy and Daddy aren't sure but they think I got a few bites in while they were in shock. I'll never tell. This time Mommy said, "That's it, your brother is going to think you are dinner and eat you." They've gotten really mean lately because they now eat where we can't get to their food unless they're eating something *they* want to share with us. No fair.

The last adventure I'm going to tell you about for now is also a water adventure that ultimately led to an emergency bath and more playtime in the tub. Mommy came into the bathroom and said to Daddy, "Oh, no. We forgot to put the bathmat up and babies are playing in the tub again." Where did she think we were if we weren't trying to help them with everything they were doing? It is, after all, the greatest place of all to play. Mommy says this story is a little embarrassing for her, but so far everyone we've told has thought it was

very funny. So, here we are playing in the tub, and Mommy decides she has to go to the bathroom. Mommy sat down on the toilet to go, and Jag and I were playing in the tub and leaping up on the bathmat on the edge just having a great time when I saw my opportunity. Mommy leaned forward to get the toilet paper, and I leaped. Mommy and I both heard a plop, and when Mommy turned to look, sure enough, there I was in the toilet bowl. Mommy said I had the funniest look of shock and bewilderment on my face that she'd ever seen on a ferret. (Later, Daddy said she should have seen the look on her own face.) I have to admit, generally nothing surprises me, but how did the water get in there? I also have to admit I'm glad Mommy only had to go number one. Mommy yelled for Daddy while helping me out of the toilet, and an emergency bath with that awful smelling stuff and playtime in the tub followed. Much to Jag's delight, he was invited to join in. Mommy blames her very ferret knowledgeable friends that she met at a local ferret shelter for this adventure. She said no one ever bothered to tell her that she needed to ferret proof the toilet while she was using it!

Well, that's all for now. But if I have any more great adventures, I'll be sure to share them. I'm much better about sharing than Mommy and Daddy. So far, Jag hasn't had any great adventures like these, but he does like to join in the fun afterwards. Maybe he too will have some great adventures soon to shock Mommy and Daddy and share with all of you.

This story is for Grandma Pat and Grandma Mary.

Barbara Kretschmer is a ferret owner from Batavia, New York. She and her husband have owned ferrets for about three years. They take in foster ferrets to help out their local ferret shelter. Since June 1998, they have had 14 ferrets in their home.

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FUR TRICKS

Episode #1

by Carla Smith

NARRATOR: These are the foragings of the Furship "Ferret Surprise." Its continuing mission — to explore strange new rooms, to seek out new mischief, and to boldly go where no ferret has been allowed to go before.

[Strange, spacey theme music, gradually fading into the sound of galloping paws... A stocky black Scottish Terrier comes racing around the corner, panting hard. He is wearing a bright red sweater. Two Ferrets are on the dog's back, clinging to the sweater.]

FERRET #1: Faster! Faster! We'll never break through the Barrier at this speed!
DOG: I'm sorry, Captain! I'm giving it all I've got!
FERRET #2: It's true, Captain! We're going to break up pretty soon!
FERRET #1: Faster, I said! Helm — activate the overdrive!
DOG: Oh, no...

[Ferret #2 grabs the dog's stumpy tail between her teeth and bites hard. Dog yelps and puts on a sudden burst of speed.]

FERRETS: Wheeeeeee!
DOG: Me engines canna stand the strain of this much longer, Captain!
FERRET #2: Scotty's right, Sir! Listen, he's starting to barkfire!
FERRET #1: Not much farther — Look! There's the Barrier!
DOG: Brace yoursel's!

[The dog and ferrets crash through a swinging door into the kitchen. Floor changes from carpet to slick tile. Dog goes into an uncontrolled power spin.]

FERRET #1: Hang on, Number Two! Scotty, pull up! Pull up!

[Legs flying, the dog manages to end the spin just before crashing into the wall. Dog and ferrets collapse on the floor, laughing wildly.]

FERRET #1: Well done, Scotty!
FERRET #2: Yeah! That was the best ride yet!
DOG: (panting) Thank ye, Captain! But ye didna' need to nip me sae hard. (Heads for water bowl.)
FERRET #1: As long as we're here, got any ideas for getting into the Neutral Human Food Zone, Number Two?
FERRET #2: Well, if Scotty stands up and I get on his head, I think I can balance long enough to get the door open.
FERRET #1: Can you do it, Scotty?
DOG: It's easy enough, aye, but I willna' do it. Ye ken, the Missus doesna' like us getting intae the cupboards.
FERRET #1: Now, Scotty, she's not here right now. Who's going to know? We'll be in and out before she ever gets home.
FERRET #2: Besides, Scotty — isn't that where she keeps your jerky treats?
DOG: Aye, but last time I helped ye with summat' like that ye forgot me and stuffed yoursel's. I didna' get anything except trouble frae the Missus when she found the mess!
FERRET #1: Captain's promise, Scotty! We'll knock all the treats down to the floor for you. It's the least we can do.
DOG: Och, well...I'm a fool, but up ye go then, and keep your paws out of me eyes!

[Dog stands up on two legs, braced against the bottom cupboard door. Ferret #2 climbs up the dog's sweater and onto the dog's head, hooks a paw into the upper cupboard door, and swings it open. She then climbs into the cupboard. Ferret #1 follows.]

FERRET #2: Look out below! Here it comes!

[Sounds of scrabbling, then a box of raisins comes flying out from the cupboard door and lands on the floor. A box of crackers, a bag of marshmallows, a package of jerky treats, and various other items follow. The ferrets climb down the dog's back to the floor.]

FERRET #1: See, Scotty? Just as promised. Let's eat!

[Not much happens for the next few minutes as the animals happily munch away. After the raisins are gone, however...]

FERRET #2: Hey, Captain! Neat-O! Listen to the crunch when I jump on a cracker!

[Much dooking, chuckling, and crunching is heard as the ferrets spread out the crackers and begin to dance on them.]

DOG: Och, we're gonna get intae trouble for sure now...
FERRET #1: You worry too much, Scotty! This is fun! Come on, join us!
FERRET #2: Wheeee!

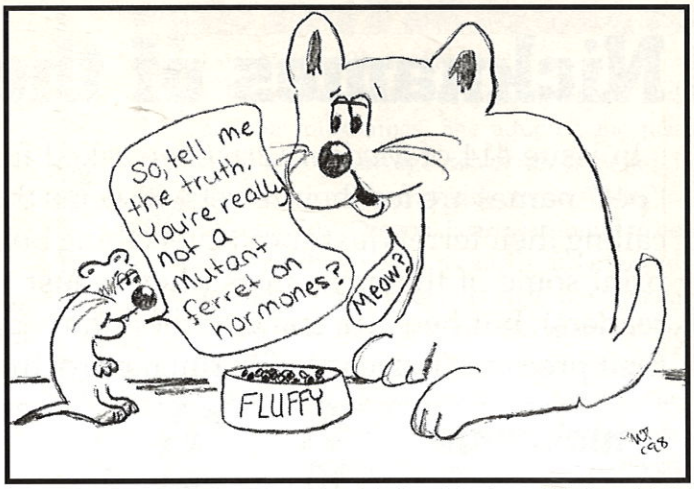
[In the background a car is heard pulling into the driveway. A car door opens and closes, and human footsteps are heard on the porch. There's a jingling of keys and the sound of the front door being unlocked and opened.]

DOG: It's the Missus!
FERRET #2: What do we do now, Captain?
FERRET #1: Teleport! Teleport! Abandon ship! All hands for themselves!
DOG: Hey, wait!

[The two ferrets disappear. Dog slips on the crumbled crackers, runs the wrong way and bumps into...]

MISSUS: Eeek! Look at the mess in my kitchen! I leave for just a few minutes and look what happens. I can't turn my back on you for a second!

[Angry scolding is heard, accompanied by the sound of a broom sweeping up the mess. This fades into the closing bars of the strange, spacey theme music, mixed with ferret giggles.]



A Barnaby Ferret cartoon by Melissa Taylor of Holland MI

Modern Ferret Magazine

Almost as much fun as a barrel of ferrets!

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Carla Smith lives with eight ferrets plus a number of foster ferrets, as well as a cat, reptiles, and a parrot. She helped found the Rio Grande Domestic Ferret Club in 1996. She is also the owner/coordinator/chief pooper-scooper of WhyNot? Ferrets. Contact Carla at The Rio Grande Domestic Ferret Club, P.O. Box 26928, El Paso, TX 79926. Or e-mail: WhyNot Fert@aol.com

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Nicknames of the Long and Slinky

In Issue #14 of *Modern Ferret*, we asked for people to send letters telling us what their "pet" names are for their ferrets. It seems that many of our readers take great pleasure in calling their ferrets just about everything but the ferret's full given name. We aren't able to print some of the nicknames (they're just a bit too "colorful" for some of our younger readers), but here are some of the funny and unusual things *Modern Ferret* readers call their precious fuzzies. We'll print more of them next time.

Dear Mary and Eric,

My husband and I own (are owned by? It's a continuing debate) six adorable fuzzies and, needless to say, they are all nicknamed, but of course!

First we have Sioned, a cute little silver-mitt that's two years old. Her main nicknames are Sionedles and Ferret Genius Girl. We can't keep her out of anything!

Ah, Maarken! He's a two-year-old sable who has only one nickname, Gelatinous. When you pick him up, he just flops around. Such a laid-back guy.

Then there is Tarrant. Our evil little deaf blaze. He has the most nicknames, as he seems to draw our attention the most. Tarrantula, Spiider, Spiidles, and Munchkin to name a few.

Can't forget Felony! She really doesn't live up to her name. She's an incredibly sweet three-year-old sable I adopted from a friend. Her only nickname is Fel Bell.

Next is Angelika. An adorable black-eyed white — she's so tiny! She doesn't even know her real name. I nicknamed her Poof from the moment we brought her home from her tendency to "poof" every time we let her out to play. She still does that a year later, no matter how often she's let out!

Last but not least, we have Myrlyn. We mainly call him Myrl. He's such a big fluffy goof. He also has the nickname of Skitzo, as he'll run from everything!

They all get the nickname of Rat when they do something really bad.

Keep the nicknames rolling! They are great fun to read!

Dooks!

Erin Haggenmiller

Colorado

To Eric, Mary, Sabrina, Marshmallow, Knuks, Trixie, Bosco da Gama, Balthazar, Cauliflower & Koosh:

I have been owned by Sparky since February. I wanted to put in my part for Nicknames of the Long & Slinky.

I had never actually met a ferret when I got the brainstorm to get one. I met a few while I was considering and I did some research, so I thought "Sparky" would be appropriate, since when ferts are awake they are generally lively. So, Sparky it was. And she lives up to her name! There are variations on Sparky — Spark Plug and Sparkles are the most common. And there are some that have no relation to her name, just her adorableness: Muffin-Face, Ferret-Mouse, Swee'Pea, Stinky, Pumpkin-Head, Punkin', Sweetie, Clown, Angel, and Sleepy-Head. She is a doll!

Sincerely,

Pat De Rose & Sparky

New Jersey

Dear Modern Ferret Staff (both human and fuzzy),

I thought that I might send in my "kids'" names and nicks to the Nicknames of the Long and Slinky. I have six ferrets collectively and, like all people, have given them nicknames, which they've more or less developed themselves with time.

1. Holly (a six-year-old champagne/silver-mitt female): Hollywood, Holly Would if she could, Grumpy, Grumpatocious, Holl, and Momma Holly.

2. Jarith (a three-year-old BIG sable male): Boo, Boo Dude, Boo Monster, The Boo, and JarithBoo. Boo is short for boozer, a joke from his desire for soda, preferably Mt. Dew. We caught him trying to open the top of a two-liter bottle once, just to get to his favorite soda.

3. Bartholomew (a one-year-old butterscotch male): Bart, Bartman, Bart Dude, and Butterball.

4. Angus (a one-year-old sterling silver-mitt male): Angie, Angel, Momma's Boy, Fat Boy, Gus, and GusGus.

5. Shaiel (a one-year-old sable panda female, who's deaf): Shai and ShaiGirl. Most of the time when holding her close, we just make soft rumbling sounds and blow lightly on her fur. We've found that, as a deaf ferret, she finds those things most comforting.

6. Morgan Le Fay (a two-month-old chocolate/silver-mitt female): Morgie, Morgana, Morgan, Morgan Faychild, Trouble, Morgan Cat Chaser, Munchkin, and Squirt. Morgan's best friend is a 17-pound cat named Meaghan Fern Slayer.

Sincerely,
Kristi and the Horde (Holly, Jarith, Bart, Angus, Shaiel, and Morgan)

Dear Modern Ferret Family,

I wanted to share with you my ferret Pearl and her nicknames. She adopted me just over two years ago when on a whim I decided to go check out the ferret shelter in Oregon City, Oregon. Pearl was found to be a very fitting name, as she is a dark-eyed white with an apricot tint to her color. I have found that there are not too many other ferrets around here with her beautiful color.

Well now to get down to business. The following names are what we have developed over the few years since we received Pearl into our home. Pearl Girl, Pearly Girl, Pearl Bird, Pearly Bird, Bird Girl, Dirty Bird Weasel Beeze, Beezel Girl, Goof Girl Pearl, Weasel Girl, Furry Worm, and Worm girl. The bird part comes from other people misunderstanding me when I talk of my pet ferret, many people think I say "parrot."

Melissa Braukman
Washington

Dear Mary,

I like the section in the magazine about nicknames for ferrets and I have to admit I am guilty of such shameless name changing as everyone else, if not worse. I would like for all to be witness to the mass confusion of names.

Possum is my six-and-a-half-year-old male and he gets called OOh Possum, Stinky Pinky (he is a dark-eyed white and has a very pink nose and, well, the rest is self-explanatory), Old man, Old man Possum, Snuggle Guy, and Pa Possum.

Patunia, my six-year-old silver-mitt, has a wide range of names: Pa lala tuna, Tuna, Patunia, Tiny Tune, Loony Tunes, Worm Girl, and, when she lies in front of the heater, Hot Tuna Melt.

We recently acquired a sweet but very vocal male cinnamon panda, which we named Eros (after the God of Love). Already he has received a few nicknames. The first, which is obvious if you were around him, is Squeaky Boy and Whiny One because he is always crying for attention (loudly), and Sweet Lil. All my weasels are referred to as Sweet Stinkies. Yeah, I know that is definitely an oxymoron, but it fits.

I hope you all enjoy these names. I believe it doesn't matter what you call 'em as long as you love 'em. Keep loving those Fur Babies. Thanks for the magazine, it's great.

Dooks and Love,
Rebecca and Stephanie (my two-legged daughter)
Possum, Patunia, and Eros (fuzzy children)
Muesky, Tewah, and Ra (four-legged fur people)
and Bridgett (the dog)

Thanks for sending in your ferrets' nicknames!

Minding Your Own Business™ Part II

For those of you who didn't know: The word for a group of ferrets is a "business" of ferrets (just like a "flock" of seagulls).

First of all, I would like to thank Tiffany Taylor for being so wonderful to us. Often I get ignored when I call someplace and say I'm from *Modern Ferret* Magazine. In this case, I called *Playboy* and left a message that I was from *Modern Ferret* and wanted to interview Tiffany Taylor. The next day there was a phone call early in the day. I answered the phone expecting to have to explain to another salesperson why we didn't want to change long-distance service, and was instead greeted with, "Hi! This is Tiffany Taylor!" I was stunned! Tiffany is a big fan of the magazine and a wonderful ferret owner (with some very spoiled ferrets), and I'm very glad that she was able to be our first celebrity interview. She spent several days with us and was very patient with us, even though we had no experience in photographing humans. It was a lot of fun, although I was very worried that I wouldn't know how to take a good picture! Tiffany supports herself via a website. The ".com" name is pretty easy to figure out or find via a search, so if you're an adult and you're smitten go check it out.

I'd like to thank Samir Husni (known to the world as "Mr. Magazine") for his constant championing of *Modern Ferret*. He heard about us through the *NY Times* article on us back in 1995 and has been a supporter ever since. Samir Husni and the other judges from *min magazine* were kind enough to acknowledge all the effort we put into *Modern Ferret* with one of the most prestigious awards in the publishing industry. The cheer we received from the other publishing professionals when we were called for our award was amazing! Everyone from all of these very established magazine institutions was both supportive and full of questions. It was very exciting. The only sour note was that we arrived so late to the ceremony because we were busy working on this issue and we didn't get to talk to everyone we wanted to. Paul Rossi and Matthew Bishop from *The Economist* were very friendly and helped us feel a lot less awkward being a newcomer in a roomful of established professionals. (For example: *The Economist* has been published for over 150 (yes 150!) years more than we have.) Tonia Ries from *Information Week* was nice enough to take some pictures of us so we would have some in this issue (the awards were on March 16 and this issue went to press on March 23 — which is why we were so busy).

On the ferret side, Knuks' vaccine reaction was very scary. After she got her shot she was fine for a few minutes. I was holding her and letting her crawl through my jacket sleeve as she likes to do, so that I could monitor her. Then I noticed her paws were a little reddish. As I pointed it out to Mary her nose turned red and then her entire body turned red. It was a very frightening experience, and the only reassuring thing was the attentiveness of Dr. Horowitz and Dr. Ulrich and their concern to try to save Knuks. There can be a lot of guilty feelings when your ferret has a reaction, since it was your decision that they get vaccinated. However, it is important to remember that the disease being prevented, distemper, is fatal and is a horrible way to die. Since our ferrets are constantly out in the public, the chances of being exposed to distemper are too great to ignore.

For all of you who try to contact us, please be aware that we do have our own problems too (like Knuks' reaction) and that there are thousands of you and only two of us. We just can't talk, fax, write, e-mail, with all of you — there isn't enough time. We work all the time and there are always things forgotten, done slowly, etc. We try to do the best we can.

On a RARE night out, we were actually recognized while bowling (how embarrassing!) by someone (not a ferret owner) who had seen Mary on TV. WOW! FAME!

Personal Notes: I'm very glad that Blondie is back together and has a new album out. Go see the new *Star Wars* movie! I'm hoping that all the *Star Wars* movies come out while I'm still around to see them (and you thought it took us a long time to finish issue #2 after issue #1!). I just got a copy of *Collected Works* by Blotto on CD! It's what I've long been waiting for, as my Blotto records are, well, blotto. It's 78 minutes of songs that match my sense of humor. Enjoy!

—Eric

On Sunday night (3/14) at midnight we finished taking photos for this issue & decided to drop them off to be developed so we would have them Monday afternoon. We went outside only to discover it was snowing — so badly that we only made it halfway to the photo place before we chickened out (and we have a 4-wheel drive Isuzu Rodeo). This act of nature caused a lot of scheduling problems for us and ultimately made us lose a lot of sleep and arrive at our awards celebration rather late. Pretty snow, though.

This is what it looks like when we produce the May/June issue.

Answers to Trivia Questions from page 13

(1) Betty DeGroff's hand appeared on the front cover of issue #11.
(2) Jennifer Wilson appeared in Pink Noses of issue #6 with red hair and Pink Noses of #21 with blond hair. I was looking through the #6 recently and thought she looked familiar...

Please help us! Here's how:

We have been trying for a very long time to get PETsMART to carry *Modern Ferret*. We can't seem to get through to their magazine buyer, Gwen Lenz — even after sending her information about being chosen as one of the 12 best magazines. Perhaps if enough ferret owners called her or wrote to her, she would realize the importance of *Modern Ferret* to ferret owners. Please call her or write to her and let her know why you think PETsMART should carry *Modern Ferret*. — Thanks, Eric.

Gwen Lenz
PETsMART
19601 N 27th Ave
Phoenix AZ 85027

Phone: 602-580-6100 ext 2926

Contests!

Pink Noses™ PHOTO CONTEST

Your Ferret Famous

Do you have a photogenic ferret? Your ferret's photo could be on the next *Modern Ferret* trading card (or here in the magazine)! Here's how:

*All ferrets, regardless of nose color, are eligible.

*Pick out your favorite glossy finish photo(s). No professional photos, please.

*Write the following information for each photo. Your name, address, phone number, and your ferret's name. Please be careful to not damage your photo - we've had problems with ink bleeding through photos or rubbing off onto other photos. If there's something special about your ferret you'd like to mention, please do so!

*We regret that due to the sheer volume of photos we receive, we will no longer be able to return photos.

*Any of your photos that are published become eligible to be on trading cards or other *Modern Ferret* productions with no additional compensation..

*By entering the contest, you grant permission to *Modern Ferret* to use the photos. Credit to the photographer is, of course, given.

Send entries to:

Modern Ferret attn: Pink Noses Contest
PO Box 1007
Smithtown NY 11787

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READER ART

ART CONTEST

Rembrandt and Picasso may have fame, but YOU can get something they can't get — a 12-pack of Cheweasels from Hyper-Fur Ferrets' Products. (And some fame in the ferret community.)

Break out the pencils, pens, paint, crayons, whatever! Please send us your original black and white or color pieces of ferret artwork. Any type of artwork is acceptable, as long as it features ferrets.

Contest entry grants *Modern Ferret* publication rights to the artwork. We will, unfortunately, not be able to return art submissions. If you have a special case/problem, please call us.

Please ship your art VERY carefully! Mail can sometimes be kinda' rough.

We will be running the Reader Art section in every issue of *Modern Ferret*, so keep sending in art! We'll run as many pieces as we can and the best submission from each issue will receive a 12-pack of Cheweasels from Hyper-Fur Ferrets' Products.

Send entries to:

Modern Ferret attn: Reader Art Contest
PO Box 1007
Smithtown NY 11787

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See page 33 for order information.

More fun...
More information...
More ferrets!

FUNNY FERRET TRICKS

Humor Contest

Ferrets are pretty goofy creatures!

Now we'd like to celebrate the ferret's comic nature with a humor contest. What lengths does your ferret go to for a treat? What funny predicaments has your ferret gotten into? You can show us by sending a photo or short story. We'll try to run as many as space permits.

*The top 5 entries received will win a Ferretude T-shirt and the best entry received will also get a $25 value of Eight in One ferret products which includes new ferret canned treats and ferret canned diet.

*Please make sure you provide the following information: Your name, address, phone number, and your ferret's name.

*We regret that due to the sheer volume of entries we receive, we will not be able to return entries.

*By entering the contest, you grant permission to *Modern Ferret* to use your submission in the magazine or related materials. In any usage, credit to the submittor will be given.

Send entries to:

Modern Ferret attn: Funny Ferret Tricks
PO Box 1007
Smithtown NY 11787

SPONSORED BY:

8 in 1 Pet

MODERN FERRET'S CONTESTS ARE SPONSORED BY OUR REGULAR ADVERTISERS - PLEASE SHOW THEM YOUR SUPPORT!

Ferret Events Calendar

This listing is updated as new/more complete information is received.

May

8 — Ferret Services of Freedom, "4th Annual Ferret Fun Day." 10 A.M. - 4 P.M. Location: North Conway Community Center in North Conway, NH. For information: Stephanie Mudgett 603-539-5631.

22 — Susquehanna Valley Ferret Club (SVFC), "1999 Spring Ferret Frolic"; LIFE Sanctioned All Specialty Ferret Show. Location: Silver Spring Banquet Hall in Mechanicsburg, PA. For information: 717-561-0354 or e-mail: SVFCFerret@aol.com

June

5 — The Great Lakes Ferret Association, "FerretQuest '99." Doors open to the public at 10:00 A.M. Admission: $4 - Adults; $1 - Children under 10. Free Admission w/proof of current GLFA Membership. Classes: Breeder, Altered, Specialty (Albino, Panda, Self, Cinnamon, Shelter/Rescue, Handicap, AOV). Ferret games and GLFA Raffle all day. Location: Monroe Multi-Sports Complex, 333 North Dixie Highway in Monroe, Michigan (Exit 15 off I-75 [North Dixie Exit]). For information: Micki Wingate 734-587-3959 or e-mail: checker@pcplus-mi.com

12-13 — United Ferret Organization, "Ferret Show and Wild West Ferret Round-up." Ferret Rodeo is main event. Also a Ferret Show. Events for kids and adults with their ferrets. Vendors welcome; advertising in the U.F.O. Ferret Rodeo Program available. Location: Golden Spike Arena, Ogden, UT. For information: Rick Roller 801-572-6010 or write to United Ferret Organization, 808 E. 9400 S. #150, Sandy, UT 84094 or e-mail: Uferreto@sprynet.com

13 — Oregon Ferret Association (OFA), "13th Annual Ferret Fun Fair." Officially sanctioned as part of Portland's Rose Festival. 9A.M. - 4P.M.. Ferret games, photo contest, ferret playground, vet booth, vendors, speaker, live auction, door prizes. Ferret games from 9A.M. to noon. Speaker at 1P.M. followed by auction. Admission: $5 per person, or $10 per family; non-participant admission is free. Proceeds help fund OFA-hosted ferret veterinary conference and low-cost vaccination clinic. Location: Oaks Amusement Park in Portland, OR. For information: OFA 503-306-2968 or on the web: www.oregon-ferret.org

19 — The Ferret Aid Society, Frolic and Olympics. Starts 2 P.M. Prizes, ribbons, and fun stuff for both ferrets and their parents. Location: Toronto's High Park, Toronto, Canada. For information: 905-275-0438 or e-mail magick@echo-on.net

July

24 — WarmFuzzy Ferret Shelter. Education, fun, games, vendors, serious (specialty classes) and silly ferret judging. Proceeds benefit the shelter. Location: Leesport Farmers Market near Reading, PA. For information: Shirley Hertzog 610-926-9087 or warmfuzzy@aol.com

August

15 — Pacific Ferret Shelter Network, "2nd Annual Grand Ferret Fun Frolic." 10 A.M. - 4 P.M. Proceeds from this event go to starting new shelters in the State of Oregon (six shelters were started last year). Vendors, live music, food, ferret games, costume contest, and live auction. Location: Clackamas Park, Oregon City, OR. For information: David & Christine Mathis 503-557-8369 or e-mail slinky@teleport.com or write to Pacific Ferret Shelter Network, P.O. Box 5007, Oregon City, OR 97045.

28 — Tristate Ferret Connection and Heart of Ohio Ferret Association, "Ferret Extravaganza 1999." Location: Best Western North in Columbus, OH. For information: Pam Hostetler 614-873-0246 or e-mail: pamela.hostetler@gte.net or Scarlett Gray 614-885-6538 or e-mail: scarlettg@aol.com

September

11 — Ferret Wise Shelter, "4th Annual Ferret Wise Reunion Picnic and Ferret Walk-a-thon." 11A.M. - 4 P.M. New! Collectible Bear auction/ raffle (also ferret items on auction/raffle table). Winner will be drawn for the raffle of "The Shelterer, Ariel & Duncan." Tickets are $2 each or 3/$5 through Sept 11th. Event includes games, contests, prizes, trophies, refreshments, and vendors. Annual group photograph and much more. Pre-registration required for ferret walk-a-thon (Trophies awarded). This event is open to the public, admission. Location: Marlborough, NH. For information: Ferret Wise 603-876-4975 (for vendor space availability — restricted to ferret shelters and affiliates — or to obtain sponsor packet, call the shelter).

October

30 — Baltimore Ferret Club, "Ferret Freedom Fiesta." Location: Tall Cedars Hall, Baltimore, MD. For information: Wanda Larkin e-mail: BaFerret2@aol.com

November

13 — Susquehanna Valley Ferret Club (SVFC), "1999 Fall Ferret Frolic"; LIFE Sanctioned Championship Ferret Show. Location: Silver Spring Banquet Hall in Mechanicsburg, PA. For information: 717-561-0354 or e-mail: SVFCFerret@aol.com

December

11 — Ferret Wise Shelter. Open house — A Ferrets Holiday! 10 A.M. - 2 P.M. Join the shelter staff, hospice folks and friends for light refreshments and seasonal music. Meet the shelter mascot and residents, share their stories. (Sorry, no adoptions this date.) Holiday gift items and cage accessories will be available: cages crafted by Martins Cages, custom bedding accessories by X-tasy Ferrets, Etc., Cheweasel toys by Hyper Fur Products, and much, much more. Bring a donation of paper towels, laundry detergent, treats, toys etc. for the shelter kids! For information: Ferret Wise 603-876-4975.

ATTENTION FERRET GROUPS HOLDING EVENTS:
Listings in the Ferret Events Calendar are FREE! However, you MUST send us information about your event in order to have it listed.
Please note that you must send us your information WELL IN ADVANCE. (the sooner you send the information, the sooner we list it)

Send your events information to:
Modern Ferret attn: Events Calendar
PO Box 1007
Smithtown NY 11787
or e-mail mary@modernferret.com

NOTE: We try to make these listings as accurate as possible. Errors may occur when clubs send incomplete, confusing, or conflicting information. Clubs: Please try to send accurate information as early as possible. Readers: Always call to confirm the exact date and location.

If your club is having a show or fun match, you must get the information to *Modern Ferret* as far in advance as possible. We can no longer list shows for which we have not received information. When submitting information for a show listing, please include the following:

1. Date. 2. Club/show sponsor (e.g., Anytown Ferret Club). 3. Show title, if any (e.g., "Ferret Show #1"). 4. Sanctioning body, if any (e.g., LIFE, NAFA, AFA). 5. Place of show (city, state, hall if known). 6. Contact (can be any or all: phone/fax/address/e-mail). These listings are FREE, so send in your information!

Remember — ferret shows are a great opportunity to meet experienced ferret owners and ask questions!

Note: **Modern Ferret will be attending very few shows this year so that we can spend more time on producing the magazine and improving our customer service. While we enjoy meeting our readers in person, travel can take too much time out of our production schedule. We hope that by improving the magazine's service, everyone will benefit.**

KOOSH AND THE GANG

Review the Treat Tumbler

Ferret Treat Tumbler
Pets International, Ltd. (Super Pet®)
2605 S. Clearbrook Drive
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
Phone: 847-956-7127
Contact: Diane Pawelko

Intellectual stimulation is a vital part of keeping ferrets happy. Having their brains work on figuring out how to get a treat reduces their stress levels and keeps them from thinking about less desirable (to the humans) behaviors.

These treat balls have an adjustable sized hole that will dispense the treats (your choice of treat) when the ball is pushed around. Though not all ferrets will get the concept, those that do will find lots of enjoyment in giving themselves a workout. These toys have an adorable ferret face and footprint design and come in multiple colors.

XANY
WEASEL-WARDANCER PRINCESS

"The Bigger They Are..."

Story and Illustrations by Mary R. Shefferman

Foreword: In a time of overbearing dogs and cats, stinky hobs, and humans bent on cleaning ears, ferrets in turmoil cried out for a hero. She was Xany, a Weasel-Wardancer Princess forged in the heat of a good wrestling match. Her silliness will change the world.

Xany was a mighty sable ferret with a silly disposition. She traveled the countryside righting wrongs and putting evildoers in their place. Xany's sidekick, Babblette, always traveled with Xany on her many adventures. Babblette was a panda ferret that liked to chatter a lot and she was the fastest runner Xany had ever met. One day, the two jills walked into the living room of a suburban split-level house. Many ferrets were milling about. Xany and Babblette were looking around for a food dish when they overheard a kit and his mother having a disturbing argument.

"Why can't I have the *whole* raisin, Mama? I used the litter box and I didn't splash the water out of the dish!" cried the tiny ferret kit.

"I know, sweetheart, but you're only allowed to have half the treat. You know that," the mother ferret said gently.

"Aw," said Babblette, "give him the whole raisin." She patted the little kit on the head. "What could it hurt?"

"You're a stranger around here," said the mother ferret. "Why don't you mind your own business?"

"All businesses are our business," said Xany.

"Run along, kitten," said the mother ferret to her son. She turned to Xany, "if you're going to stay here, you'd better learn to live by the rule."

"What rules?" Xany asked as she narrowed her eyes.

"Only one rule: Half to The Fat One," said the mother ferret. "We must give The Fat One half of all the treats we get... or else."

"Or else?" asked Babblette.

"Or else The Fat One drags you around the house and then sits on you."

"It sounds like I should have a little talk with this Fat One," said Xany.

"You don't want to do that. He's as mean as a human with a shampoo bottle. And he's a darn sight bigger than you."

"You let me worry about that," said Xany. "Where can I find this Fat One?"

"I won't tell you. I won't have any part of this. I wash my paws of it!" The mother ferret turned tail and ran off under the couch.

"Hmm..." hummed Xany.

"Xany, what if he *is* bigger than you? What if you can't beat him?" asked Babblette.

"Babblette, it doesn't matter how big you are, it only matters how fast you are. And I'm faster than any old fat ferret. They don't call me the Weasel-Wardancer Princess for nothing."

"I guess you're right."

"I know I'm right," said Xany. "You wait here with these little ferrets. I'm going to go find The Fat One."

"Be careful."

"I will."

Xany began scouting the living room. She came across a big cage with a lot of little ferrets in it. They were all snoozing or playing quietly. She didn't see any fat ferrets. But she did see a lot of half-eaten raisins and other treats in a pile by the side of the cage.

The feeling came upon her slowly. There were little beady black eyes watching her. She casually sniffed around a water dish, then a food dish, all the while closing in on the little brown nose that was sticking out ever so slightly from behind a little pillow. The dark sable ferret

never had a chance. He didn't realize until it was too late that Xany knew he was watching her. She lunged at him, grabbed him by the scruff, and tossed him on his back. Then she swiftly jabbed him on the neck with her right and then her left front paw.

"I've just cut off the flow of Ferretone to your tongue, you have thirty seconds to tell me all you know about The Fat One."

"Ugh!" cried the ferret, his eyes wide. "He hangs around in the hammock in the cage in one of the rooms on the second level of the house. He's really fat. That's all I know. I swear!"

"Do you swear on your mother's stolen socks?"

"All right! He throws me a raisin now and then to spy on the other ferrets, so he knows if they are giving him half their treats. There are four others who work for him. Please! I don't know any more!"

Xany jabbed the ferret's neck again. The ferret breathed a sigh of relief. Xany grabbed the ferret by the scruff, "Tell your fat friend that I'm looking for him — and he won't like it when I find him." She let the ferret go and he ran off sideways, bonking into the leg of a coffee table before racing out of the room.

"So, The Fat One has five little weasely friends," she pondered. Then she smiled and wiggled her whiskers. "I think I like those odds."

Xany found the room where The Fat One was lounging in his hammock. He was lying on his back with his head hanging off the edge of the hammock. He must have been six pounds! Xany knew she could beat The Fat One, but she would need someone to distract his weasely friends. Xany went back to the living room to find Babblette.

Babblette ran up to Xany as she came into the living room.

"Xany! You won't believe the stories these ferrets have been telling me. We have to do something. The Fat One has robbed them of their spirit. There are kits here who don't even know what the Dance of Joy is," she babbled excitedly.

"This story could use a good fight," Xany muttered. Then she grinned. "I have a plan," she said. "*A simple plan*."

Babblette went with Xany to the room where The Fat One was lounging. She walked up to the cage where the five weasely ferrets were snoozing. "Hey! What does a jill have to do to get a good game of tag around here?" she asked, batting her eyelashes and tilting her head just so.

Four of the five ferrets woke up and immediately started sniffing at Babblette. She got them just interested enough, then raced off towards the door. The four ferrets raced after her.

"This *is* simple," thought Babblette as she ran from room to room with the four weasely ferrets in hot pursuit.

Meanwhile, Xany had slipped into The Fat One's cage and dragged off the fifth guard into a corner under a bed. She tickled the ferret on the belly and left him rolling around in a fit of giggles.

"Now it's your turn, Fat One," Xany challenged as she stepped on the giant ferret's huge belly.

"Well, if it isn't Xany, the Weasel-Wardancer Princess. I figured you'd show up sooner or later," said The Fat One. He sounded as if he had marbles in his mouth.

"I hate being predictable," Xany growled. "Can you guess what I'm going to do next?"

"I think you're going to get your tail kicked by a huge ferret," said The Fat One.

"Fat chance!" Xany shouted as she jumped on top of The Fat One and began to toss him around.

"Wait!" shouted The Fat One. "I'm the law here. I am the leader. Whatever happened to 'Give unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's'?"

"I know Caesar," said Xany, "and you're no Caesar, sir." She grinned impishly, "But if you want what's coming to you, I'll be more than happy to let you have it." Xany began to hop around the giant ferret in her famed wardance. She was moving so quickly that The Fat One couldn't keep his eyes on her without getting dizzy.

His eyes rolled back in his head and he fell over. The Fat One had been knocked down to size. He was lying on his back, paws outstretched, pleading, "OK! I promise I'll be nice! I won't take anyone's treats anymore. Please, get off of me!"

"I'm not even touching you," growled Xany. "Do you swear on a stack of raisins that you won't take the other ferrets' treats anymore?"

"Yes!" cried The Fat One.

The ferrets of the house thanked Xany and Babblette for all their help and sent them on their way. The two jills walked off into the sunset.

The End

No Warrior Princesses, Garrulous Sidekicks, or historical timelines were intentionally harmed in the writing of this Fairy-Tail. Several raisins lost their lives, however.

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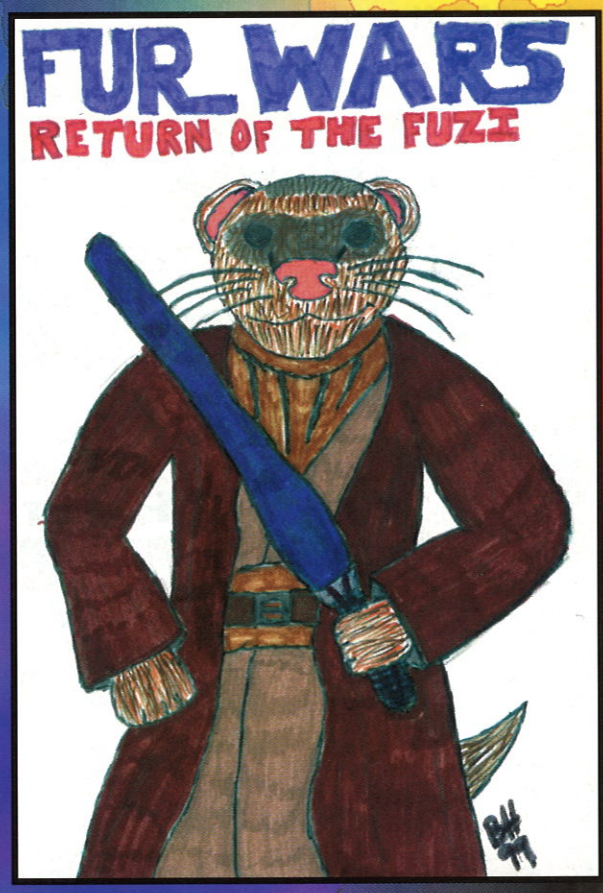

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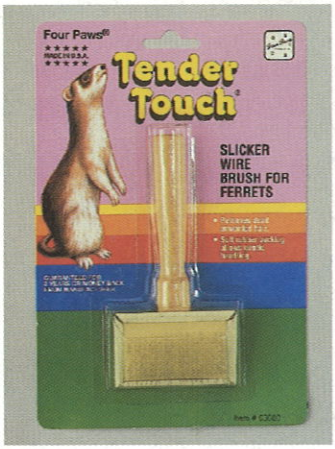

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